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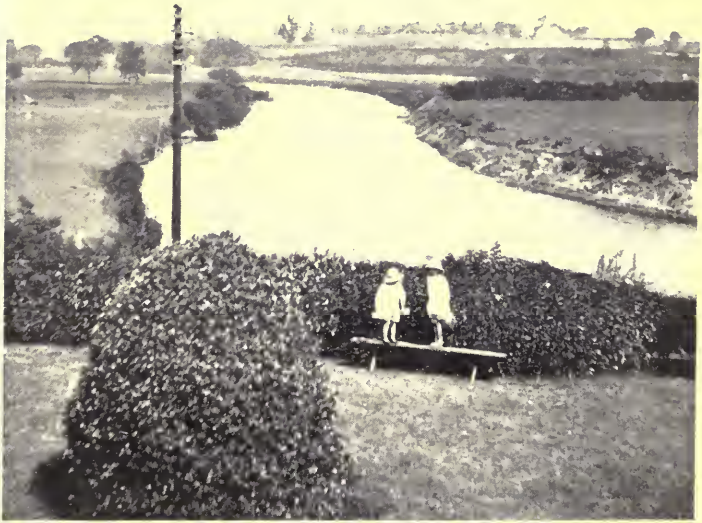
THE TROUT ARE RISING



THE SEVERN AT COUND

THE TROUT ARE RISING

IN ENGLAND AND SOUTH AFRICA

A BOOK FOR SLIPPERED EASE

BY B. BENNION ("B.B." OF THE "FIELD")

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY LETTER BY H. T. SHERINGHAM AND WITH FIFTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO

WILLIAM SENIOR

("RED SPINNER")

WITH ALL GRATITUDE

A LETTER TO THE AUTHOR

My dear B. B.,

You pay me a signal compliment in implying that I am in some degree responsible for the fact that you set about the writing of this book, for having had the privilege of reading it in the proof sheets, I find it a worthy book, and one that appeals strongly to all the wandering angler that is in me. Indeed there is much of it that does more than appeal to me. When, for instance, you were catching "daddy-ruffes" at Market Drayton or, a little later, pursuing somewhat bigger ambitions on or in the Severn at Cound, I was not many miles away from you engaged in extremely similar efforts. You appear to have had more trout in your early adventures than I (for the further one got down the Severn, even in those far-off days, the greater rarity did a trout become), and there you had the advantage of me. But I am pretty sure that I never let my feelings so far run away with me as to cause me to forget the baiting of my hook, and that is where I seem to have had the advantage of you.

For the rest, what you say of your early piscatorial career might, with a few trifling variations, be said of mine, and, I expect, of many another besides.

Nor is it otherwise when you come to the things of later years. Well do I know the comfortable inn, the life-long friendships happily begun in its smoking-room or besides its waters, the humours and chances of fishing holidays, the interesting characteristics of bailiffs, keepers, small boys, and riverside folk in general. Especially do I see again, as I study your pages, the panorama of mountain, moorland, wooded valley, and cowslip-starred pasture which is given to us lucky anglers, or join gratefully in the year's grand procession of sweet spring, radiant summer, mellow autumn, and sparkling winter. I think it will be with other readers as with me, and if so they will enjoy themselves.

One other advantage of experience I must sorrowfully concede to you—your knowledge of wonderful South Africa. As private secretary to that distinguished son of the empire, Sir George Farrar, as well as in your active journalist days, you must have met most men and seen most things that could enable you to deliver a considered opinion on the country, and it impresses me much that your passionate love of the homeland (evident on every page of the first part of your book), does not in the least diminish your patriotic affection for, and pride in South Africa. Indeed, one would say, all that was needed to

make that spacious land perfect was some trout fishing! Which it now possesses in good measure. So now, like England, South Africa is "the best country in the world to live in."

Now that, I was about to say, is a fortunate belief; but I think I must amend the saying. It is not really the belief that matters, but the believer, especially if he turns prophet and persuades others. This is what you have done, though I don't suppose you ever thought of such a thing. That ineradicable habit of yours of digging for the best in men and matters lays a certain responsibility on you when you translate it into the spirit of a book. Others, noting the evident happiness that comes of such digging, will begin to follow your example. And I can see an ultimate logical result of the labour, widely diffused, in a slight alteration of the confession of faith—"the world is the best place to live in."

And, now I come to think of it, that is what we are all after, isn't it? Really, my dear B. B., you *are* a prophet of no mean order.

Yours, in a state of thoughtfulness,

H. T. SHERINGHAM.

PREFATORY NOTE

FRIENDS who have rendered kindness in connection with this book are sincerely and warmly thanked, one and all.

To Mr. H. T. Sheringham, angling editor of the *Field*, and author of some of the best and most authoritative works we have on angling (particularly should be mentioned his "Coarse Fishing") is due the inspiration of this book. The writing of "In the Beginning" (Chapter I) is entirely the result of his experienced and generous suggestion to include a chapter on "first beginnings," the term he used. He has assisted me very really over this book. To "Red Spinner" (Mr. William Senior) must be attributed the fact that I have endeavoured to write about fishing, and to that good man's kindness and characteristics I was enabled gratefully to pay a tribute in the *Fishing Gazette*,* by special invitation of its editor, Mr. R. B. Marston.

The sub-title, "A book for 'Slippered Ease,'" indicates, I hope, that the strict subject of trout has been departed from—oftener than I am afraid

* Special article in the *Fishing Gazette*, February 14th, 1920.

is justified; but trout fishing has given me so much pleasure beyond the actual wielding of the rod that I desired to try and pass some of it on to the general reader. The phrase "slippered ease" is Red Spinner's.

The bulk of the book appears in print for the first time. Some, however, has been rewritten from articles that appeared at one time or other in the *Field*, or in the *Star*, Johannesburg. For special permission to use this material, I tender cordial thanks to the proprietors of these journals. The chapter "A 'Berg Stream" (a Drakensberg river) was first published in the late *Transvaal Leader*, Johannesburg.

Illustrations are given from photographs kindly provided by Mrs. Basil Turner (formerly Miss Helen Farrar), Johannesburg; Miss Muriel Farrar, Chicheley Hall, Newport Pagnell; Miss J. Watson, Edinburgh; Major Fownes, Shrewsbury; Major Wykeham Jones, Bath; Mr. A. J. Dent, Tenbury, Worcs; Mr. W. C. Norris, Birmingham (through Mr. and Mrs. Walter Price, Cound Lodge, Shropshire); and Mr. George E. Shaw, Deptford Park. Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Bernau have prepared the index.

To all these I offer the heartiest gratitude. They have performed for me tasks which I could not do for myself, as I had to leave for South Africa before the proofs were ready.

When serving, during the war, in the R.A.S.C. at Deptford Wharf, I happened to be billeted at 90, Evelyn Street, Deptford Park, London, S.E. 8.

After service abroad, and demobilization, and a fishing holiday, I returned to "No. 90", and there this book was written. Mr. and Mrs. George E. Shaw showed me courtesy and consideration, kindnesses innumerable, which made pleasant my time of authorship under their roof.

B. B.

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IN THE BEGINNING

"And suppose he take nothing, yet he enjoyeth a delightful walk by pleasant Rivers, in sweet Pastures, amongst odoriferous Flowers, which gratifie his Senses and delight his mind."

Col. Robert Venables : "The Experienc'd Angler" (1662).

THE TROUT ARE RISING

I

IN THE BEGINNING

JACK-SHARPS called first. In those early, far-off days, only one thing in the wide world really mattered, jack-sharps! Life concentrated on the pursuit of those diminutive, glittering trophies. The water was a vast, an imposing stream, at least a yard and a half wide, the "several fishery" of a farm near the railway station at Market Drayton, a town in Shropshire. How we boys toiled to get a bag of jack-sharps on those surreptitious, trespassing visits, for we had no extraneous aids, not even such a luxury as a butterfly net. A dry summer mercifully lessened the volume of the current, and, by means of paddling, we were able to pursue stray fishlets in person until, cornered under a stone or in some hiding-place, they were somehow or other secured in triumph. How enthralling a matter is the pursuit of jack-sharps to five-years-old, and how precious is the property which has been safely committed to the glass jar, half-full of water, was vividly brought back to my

mind nearly forty years later on a fishing tour on the Arrow, when just outside Kington, a market town in Herefordshire, I saw some little girls, paddling in thin water, busy at the same old game. The earnestness of it ! The stern purpose of the shrill voice with the Welsh accent which suddenly tore the air ! "If you touch the fish again, I'll smack you on the chops ! "

The brooklet at Market Drayton having afforded many hours of wholesome, boyish joy, we passed on to bigger things, and our next efforts were made on the local canal, without, I am afraid, the superintendent's permission. Here was made the first "throw-in," as we anglers call it, one solemn evening. The rod was frail, the line of the cheapest, but there was a suspicion of gut with a colourable hook. We were equipped, yet the evening yielded not perch, roach, dace, gudgeon, or even daddy-ruffe. Now, after many moons, mature reflection shows this to have been no matter for surprise. For in the joy and excitement of being able actually to fish with rod and line—so infinitely superior a business to scooping two-inch jack-sharps out of the water with the hands and hurling them on to the bank —it had not yet occurred to me that putting some bait, worm or paste, on the hook, was at least fashionable, and a thing done in all the best bottom-fishing circles ! Maybe there was a vague idea that a call of "Fish ! Fish ! " would bring response from the canal as a call of "Bunny ! Bunny ! " would bring response from the rabbit-

hutch. Anyhow, the confession has to be made, that in the youthful angler's excitement of holding rod and line—"just like a grown-up fisherman would!"—and in the overwhelming desire to catch a fish, the ceremony of baiting the hook had on that glorious occasion been overlooked!

The elements of angling, however, gradually unfolded themselves, and, before long, daddy-ruffes—the great reward: at any rate bigger than jack-sharps—began to bite, and when struck were lifted quivering to the skies. Now and again a gudgeon was caught. That was all. But we were getting on, and never more was the baiting of the hook forgotten.

Then, one summer evening just before bed-time, a wonderful sight was seen. A big brother and an angling friend, who had been for a day's fishing on a preserved length of the Tern, returned home, with *such* a basket of—Trout! That was their name. Great big Trout—with lovely red spots and all gleaming underneath! How fascinating they were! How I gazed and gazed! The impression then made was lasting and that youthful admiration for Trout has never gone from me. Rather have the years deepened it. Often, both in England and in South Africa, have I emptied my creel and turned the contents out on to the grass, just to look, and then have another look, at the trout. There is a certain fishmonger's shop in Bond Street, where you may see the trout swimming about in a miniature aquarium, whose water is well oxygenated. That sight has always

brought me to a pause for a few minutes. A friend of mine in Johannesburg, has in the hall of his house on Houghton Estate, a picture which catches your eye as you enter. It shows a catch of trout lying on the river bank, lovely fresh, well-conditioned fish, which must have given stubborn fights before they were landed. The scene is on the Usk. Such a picture makes one look, and look, and forget to go beyond the mat. Every hall should be so furnished, to my thinking, for there is hardly anything in nature more beautiful than a trout in all its glory.

Little wonder was it that the sight of those trout, that summer evening in the old home, inspired the hope that some day. . . . ! The boy made a big resolve. One day he would catch Trout like that !

The stages so far had been : (1) Brooklet, (2) Canal. Now, the canal had done valuable educative work. Its mathematical straightness, its soulless regularity, its level banks—it rejoiced in the uninspiring title of "The Cut"—all helped by contrast to teach what a little river is. Commercial, correct, stiff, formal : that was the canal, and so to be regarded. Even where its dull, respectable track took it through the Deep Cutting, Cheswardine way, with rural scenes around, it was still the same, a canal. But the little river had character. It sang a song as it went, it "showed willing," as the homely saying goes. It was companionable, full of life ; had its little ways. Birds loved the woods by its banks. The

sun gave it of his favour, and wavelets here and there danced and sparkled with joy.

And so in time came the third stage with all its interests, fishing in a river which held Trout. The career of this little river, the Tern, from its modest source in Staffordshire to its conjunction with the majestic, sober-flowing Severn in Shropshire, I have tried to trace in another chapter. A kind landowner had, through his agent, given us boys permission to fish his length. Most grateful thanks are herein tendered, with a warmth which cold print cannot chill, to him and to all such benefactors for the unalloyed pleasure their goodness gave us.

The "some day" so ardently hoped for, which was to yield a trout, was long coming, but come it did. It was in the Dog Kennel meadows, near Market Drayton, towards the quiet, coloured end of a summer evening. With borrowed rod and tackle I had managed, at long last and after much thrashing of the waters, to get a rise to the fly. It seemed too good to be true. With every ounce of strength I struck, and forthwith, far flung behind me, lay a little trout flopping about on the grass. Bliss, indeed! But was he big enough to keep? "The smallest trout eat sweetest. . . . Nobody would say anything to a little boy like me." Yet had not some lofty soul said that the good sportsman always threw back little trout?—which remark I had unfortunately heard. The anguish was great. My first trout! The act had to be done quickly: so back into

the water was the trophy immediately returned. It is a deed which inspires in me mingled regret and pride even now.

Later on came the proud, personal possession of a fly-rod. It cost nine shillings and sixpence, exactly, at a local ironmonger's shop. Nine shillings and sixpence! Was ever rod like it? Its butt came to bear marks, crude notches, indicating a series of later triumphs from the same little river. These trout were on the small side. If, now and again, one of better size rose at the fly, nothing happened—the trout seemed to avoid the hook. One night, however, there was a thrilling adventure. With a longer cast than usual, the wet fly covered a feeding fish. Suddenly the water swirled; there was a commotion, *such* a to-do! It must have been a two-pounder, and a two-pound trout in the hands of—or rather at the end of the line of—a young and an inexperienced angler is a sensation. It was like being held by an electric battery. "Hold him tight!" shouted a friend who was fishing hard by. The sound advice came too late, or rather the big trout went too early. For he was off! The disturbance in the water calmed down, and the line came back with that feeling of emptiness with which most of us are familiar!

Good fortune did come, however. One night, just on the darkening, as they say in Scotland, a quiet rise was spotted, and the fly was thrown to the right place. It was accepted. Down went the acceptor, and kept down, sure sign of a trout well-hooked. It seemed much too big for me to

land, and in any event I had no landing net with me. But a friend was near. He gave advice, and crowned all by waiting until the fish was exhausted. Then he stooped down, and safely got the mammoth fish out of the water for me with his hands. Overjoyed, I could not wait to extract the hook, which was in fact embedded, but sped home in triumph, with trout still attached to hook, cast, line, and rod. Sweet were the parental and brotherly and sisterly congratulations. The weight was duly returned at one pound fifteen ounces. How we remember these pleasing details !

Mention of the family brings to mind the only attempt I ever knew of my mother essaying a pun. Somebody had wanted to know if I would officiate at the organ on some modest occasion. "I am sure he will," said mother, "but he is not in, at the moment; he's *off-fishing*, as it is !"

Although I was so keen, yet my methods had been hap-hazard, and it was not until after the turn of events had taken me to a town where no fishing was, and thence to another town right on the banks of the Severn in Shropshire that the novitiate was seriously entered upon. A man so near a fishable river either goes in for fishing, or leaves it alone. In my case this proximity was a perpetual invitation to fish. Even though I could manage but a few minutes at a time, there were six fishing days a week, and on Sunday I had to see what the water was like. I practised fly-casting assiduously, but my clumsy performance

would have justified any wag's grave admonition that netting was not allowed in the river. Improvement came when a good friend—the late Mr. Charles Hughes, of Iron-Bridge, beloved by everybody who knew him—with his kindly insistence made me realize the inwardness of the game. "Let your back cast *be* at the back," he would say. Extending the line well behind you, without letting it or the gut touch the ground, gives the necessary pause between the casts, makes all the difference in the forward cast. Years after, Mr. Hughes's sound teaching was practically confirmed one afternoon on the lawn at Surrey Lodge, Denmark Hill, the hospitable home of Mr. R. B. Marston, deacon of the craft and one of our first authorities on fishing. In that impromptu lesson I had the advantage of two teachers, for an ex-president of the Fly Fishers' Club also joined in sage counsel. "Keep the body still, when casting," they both enjoined. The brotherhood of fishing is more than a phrase: the past-masters delight in giving a helping hand. Their kindness to me is sincerely acknowledged. Extend the line well behind you in the air, and keep the body still—these simple, but indispensable, rules of casting are here repeated in the hope that other novices will also derive pleasure and profit by learning them.

To be an expert fisherman entails the conquest of a world of details, the mastery of much that is acquired only through long years of practice, observation, and experience. It is an apprentice-

ship whose articles most of us feel we have not yet served. I do not of course underrate the importance of other necessary details, but I think that the most essential matter for the beginner with the fly-rod, ambitious to take trout, is to learn the rules of casting and follow them. Let me expand the instruction a little.

(1) Pause between the casts, without letting the line touch the ground; or, if "a pause between the casts" conveys the sense of something awkward, put it to yourself in another way: make up your mind to re-start the forward cast precisely when you realize that you have got the line and gut out well behind you. Moreover, just as a cricket bat which is made by the batsman to drive a ball has therefore to do its duty as part of the combination, so must your fly-rod be allowed to do its share of the work. A well-built rod will respond to all reasonable demands, and it pays to have a good one. With a rod of cheap material and inferior workmanship, the top piece is very liable to come to grief if and when the inexperienced hand strikes too hard at a rising trout or catches up in herbage, etc., behind.

(2) Keep the body still. The youthful beginner is apt at first to flick his flies off. The error is corrected by experience, in which the fact that flies nowadays cost about threepence each plays its part. When first starting to practise throwing the fly, the beginner can wisely use fly-rod and line only, that is, without any gut. The addition of a cast, and later on, of a fly, and then

of a collar of flies, will be something to have in view. The art of casting without mishap to the flies consists in a steady, even action of rod and arm, and keeping the body still helps much to this end.

(3) I will add a third rule, with a parting blessing. Not only while you are a novice, but always, have a care with that first cast of the day. There is often a trout at the exact spot where the fly drops, and a trout landed at the first cast is an earnest of a good bag. It puts the fisherman in fine fettle for the day.

As I have said, the beginner has a world of things to learn but he should not be put off on that account, or because instructions are manifold. If he once gets on the right track of the casting the rest will come. Ability to throw the fly correctly brings satisfaction of itself. One feels somewhat akin to the schoolboy who, having worked out a sum, took it to his schoolmaster, who went through the figures and commented: "Very good!" "Very good!" said the boy, with some heat; "why, it's *correct*, sir!"

Gradually, my love of the river Severn intensified. With it, too, grew an increasing affection for little rivers—if they held trout! By Severnside the thought occurred, with dismay, how something would surely be missing were one's lot cast where no river fishing could be had. You may have a beautiful river—the Trent near Stone, for instance—but, with no trout in it, the picture is not the same. How many important decisions must have been taken, how many places

of abode deliberately picked out, how often alternatives of career selected, all on account of "a little bit of fishing!" One can imagine clergymen, devoted to their calling, liking the scene of their labours all the more if they can get a day's fishing now and again, perchance even allowing preferment to go by them for the sake of it. It is the same with all men who have learned to love fishing as boys. Rarely is it given up deliberately, that is to say, of choice. The joys and sorrows of it all have woven too strong a spell for that. Even in middle age men take to the craft, and some of them become not only proficient, but as keen as those who began in youth. In the Union or Dominion of South Africa a goodly number of colonial-born farmers learnt to fish with fly when trout began to thrive in rivers near their homesteads. Now the world holds no greater enthusiasts. Their veld-craft has helped them in mastering the art of stalking a trout, when cover is available. Good luck and tight lines attend all anglers, at whatever age they begin! But happiest are those who become angling novices not long after they can toddle, and who stick to it year in, year out, progressing by the natural stages of boyhood from the scramble after jack-sharps in a puddle, to the thrilling mysteries of float-fishing for ruffe or perch or roach, to the first raptures of casting a fly and landing a matchless trout, and perhaps at last to the goal of ambition, battles in great rivers with silver salmon.

THE FASCINATION OF IT

"Though the love of angling is generally acquired in youth, yet it sometimes attacks persons of more matured age ; conveys a maggot into their head, and then they dream of gentiles ; tickles their nose with a Mayfly, and straight they talk of palmers, red and black, dun cuts, granams, coachman, professors, gnats, moths, March browns and peacock hackles ; shows them a salmon in a fishmonger's shop, and then they think of nothing but angling ; and

Winna let the puir bodies
Gang about their business !"

From "The Angler's Souvenir." Edited by G. Christopher Davies.

II

THE FASCINATION OF IT

FISHING, that is, the capture of fish by any crude means that come handy, must naturally be regarded as an ancient practice. Artificial fly-fishing, however, might perhaps be reasonably pronounced a fairly modern device, since it smacks of subtlety. But it is by no means modern. Indeed, like all things under the sun, it is neither new, not even comparatively new. But it is not easy to say when the art first began.

The late Mr. Thomas Westwood had a suggestive note in *Notes and Queries* for March 25th, 1871. He said: "There can be little doubt that the invention of the artificial fly is of very ancient date. Who shall say, indeed, how soon after the fall of man this cunning lure of the fisherman first fell on the rivers outside Eden? How old is the sport? is a question continually asked. Probably as old as hunger."

The first literary reference to fly-fishing occurs in Ælian's "History of Animals," which relates how the fly *hippurus* was imitated by Macedonian anglers by the Astræus and used in effigy as a lure for the fish of that river.

In the first chapter of "The Compleat Angler," Izaak Walton points out that in the Old Testament fish hooks are but twice mentioned, once by Moses and once by the prophet Amos; though Cruden's "Concordance" discloses, throughout the Bible, many allusions to fish. But there is nothing concerning fly-fishing therein.

Nor indeed is there much to the purpose in literature before the seventeenth century, when Charles Cotton, who died in 1687, was about the first to systematize the art in the second part of "The Compleat Angler." Robert Venables, however, and James Chetham in the same century were hardly behind him as instructors.

But it is not for me to attempt exploration of the dark ages for the inventor of fly-fishing. All I know about it is that he did later generations of honest men a good turn! And he certainly bequeathed to them what the poet calls a "pleasing madness."

Many miles will the enthusiast travel by train, by motor or cycle, sometimes even on foot—a fine performance, nowadays—in order to get trout-fishing. One of the best walking feats accomplished for this object that I ever heard of was that of Sir Charles Payton ("Sarcelle"), formerly for many years British Consul at Calais, who remembers walking from Worcester to Tenbury one night about fifty years ago, fishing next day, and walking back in the evening. From Worcester to Tenbury must be a good twenty-one miles by road. As a schoolboy at Scarborough

he used on holidays to walk eight miles to the Derwent (with some long stiff hills on the way), fish several miles of the little river, catch a few trout and grayling, and walk back in the gloaming. In the middle of this January (1920) he writes to me from Scarborough that so long as he has health and strength, "and can fish in all weathers," he can hold out until spring, when no doubt he will be off for early spring salmon, and a little later for the brown trout. A testimonial to fishing this, for Sir Charles Payton is in his seventy-seventh year. There are, by the way, probably few amateurs who have so thorough and complete a diary of fishing doings as he. This diary he has kept regularly for about half a century, probably longer. If you have fished with him, as I have had the privilege of doing, you will remember that at the end of the day two duties are never neglected by him, viz., drying the line, and writing up the diary.

Scots, men and boys, will walk miles to fish, being perhaps less pampered by circumstances than Southrons, who have better communications. In South Africa, too, lads think little of ten or even twenty miles on horseback with trout as their objective, and they persevere by the riverside until night's curtain is about to fall. After sundown there is no long twilight to favour the angler as in Great Britain. Anglers cheerfully make the arduous ascent of Table Mountain in order to fly-fish the reservoirs there; and if no trout reward them—there are plenty in the

waters—most glorious scenery provides compensation ; and the wild flowers on Table Mountain are indeed worth seeing.

Soldiering gives a true measure of the popularity of a pastime. On active service the thoughts of the Imperial and Colonial rank and file, as soon as they are off duty, turn at once to such amusements as conditions allow, cricket or football, or sometimes golf. And if there be water containing fish at hand then the enthusiasts soon get to work. During the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902 fishing-tackle seemed to conjure itself up by magic. On the Klip river near Ladysmith after the raising of the siege (1900) bottom-fishing for native fish was a favourite occupation. So too on the Transvaal Klip (not the same river), miles away from town or dorp when the camp was an isolated one—at Wittkopjes, near Meyerton—men off duty were constantly fishing, and good catches of the native yellow fish, which has some of the characteristics of the Indian mahseer, were made. Superior breakfasts were a satisfactory result. That was in the early part of 1901. There were no trout in the Transvaal then, and it was a peculiar pleasure in or about 1904 to witness at nearly the same spot a distribution of trout fry under the auspices of the Transvaal Trout Acclimatization Society. An officer of the 2nd Lincolnshire Regiment stationed, during the Anglo-Boer War, on the banks of the Crocodile River near Pretoria, wrote in the *Field* (Oct. 5, 1901) : " Being quite alone, I often used to pass the days

fishing in the brown waters of the river. . . . What one would have done without the river is hard to say, and it proved a great boon for all the inmates of the fort in providing a pleasant addition to the daily fare of trek ox and goat."

From France, in the early days of the great war, reports came that the rank and file, when off duty near a river or fishable water, used to angle with a rifle and fixed bayonet for rod, with an improvised line ; hooks no doubt were procured somehow or other. Much was made of this in the illustrated papers at the time, and the rector of Boksburg, a mining centre in the Transvaal, took occasion, in a Sunday sermon, to approve heartily of the diversion, describing it as a wholesome set-off against over-concentration in time of strain. Later a good deal of fishing was done both by officers and men in parts of the great battle area where it was possible.

In the South-West African campaign of 1914–1915, when off the coast at Luderitzbucht in the early days, you could see occasional fishermen in khaki. Amongst them once, for a brief spell, was Captain Louis Botha, son of the great man. Some of those sturdy, well-built sons of Natal, the Natal Carbineers, used, now and again, when off duty, to slip down for an hour's sea-fishing ; those of them who lived on or near the Natal south coast, and enjoyed the excellent sea-fishing there, were especially skilled.

At Alexandria, Egypt, in 1918, the garrison

regiment of the Cheshires included plenty of soldiers who when off duty liked their sea-fishing from the jetty. They were stationed right on the shore, and were of the approved type of patient anglers.

At Port Sudan, Red Sea Province, it was the same. There was even a sea-fishing competition there, arranged by a sporting officer of a detachment of Northumberland Fusiliers to foster interest in the sport among his men. Many and varied, and curiously coloured, are the sea fish at Port Sudan. If you take a small boat to cross over by the mouth of the river you can see them in the clear water as plainly as if they were in an aquarium. The late Mr. F. G. Aflalo wrote some interesting articles about the sport to be obtained there.

At Khartoum, in 1918, the Nile of course attracted the devotees of angling from amongst the garrison soldiers stationed there. A sturdy Scottish gamekeeper, a private in the Northumberland Fusiliers, attached to the R.A.S.C., at Mogram, about two miles out of Khartoum, hooked and landed a Nile fish of about ten pounds weight, which I saw. This gamekeeper, who hailed from Wigtownshire, and who before the war had never been more than a few miles away from his village, had now travelled indeed. His two hobbies at home were grouse and bees, though he could lend an efficient hand to almost any out-of-door work. For his unselfish disposition he was greatly liked by his comrades.

He stood a good 6 ft. 2 in. and was a fine specimen of an angler.

If fishing were much indulged in before the war, it came to be additionally attractive when the war had begun, and after it was over. It brought rest to tired, jaded nerves, and its soothing properties and healing powers were very valuable to the convalescent. The *Times* newspaper, under the then editorship of Mr. Geoffrey Dawson (better remembered in South Africa by his former name of Mr. Geoffrey Robinson, private secretary to the High Commissioner, Lord Milner; and afterwards editor of the *Star*, Johannesburg), started a thoughtful, kindly scheme. This journal got into touch with a number of riparian owners, and made out a list of those who would give permission for wounded officers to fish in their private waters. Many a man was thus enabled to regain health and renew strength in the pleasant places of the land. "There is nothing," as Dr. Henry Van Dyke declares, "that attracts human nature more powerfully than the sport of tempting the unknown with a fishing line." And I think there is nothing that proves of greater value to human nature exhausted by the stresses of war.

A large part of the attractiveness of fishing consists in the brotherly love that is associated with it. It is perhaps true that an angler will not too readily divulge the secret of the fly on which he got his big basket of trout to other anglers who are fishing the same waters. And

perhaps he has sound reasons for discretion. In Somerset, in 1917, one visitor slipped off to the extreme end of a long reach, a hitherto neglected part of the hotel water, and for the ordinary wet flies he substituted a dry fly. He secured an unusually good bag. "Where did you get them? What was the fly?" greeted him on his proud return. He duly answered all questions. Early next morning he was again at the same spot. But he found himself one of a crowd! So for the future he vowed reticence.

In many little ways, of course, anglers are—just human. But take them all in all, they are sportsmen; kindly, considerate, and good to know. I once met unselfishness personified in a stranger, a dry-fly fisherman on the Colne at Thorney Weir, West Drayton, which is but a few miles from Paddington. From the R.A.S.C. depôt at Deptford I had slipped over for an evening's fishing. It was early in May, and I was quite unprepared for the Mayfly being up. But there they were, and the water was thick with them. (Once, by the way, I saw Mayflies in swarms at West Drayton railway station.) The unknown angler, with a cordial greeting, at once enquired if I had brought artificial Mays. I had to say "No," of course. "Well, then, I shall give you some," he immediately said. When I hesitated, he insisted: "Come, come; you must take them. You know you would have given me some if you had found me without any." Reluctance then vanished. A perfect

instance of tact and of fisherman's kindness was his way of making that timely gift. In the angling world he was "Quartus a brother." May he have many rises every time he goes a-fishing, and may none of them be short.

It was good, on one fishing trip, to hear a member of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange eulogise anglers as a race. About most kinds of men he had shrewd comments to make, but of anglers as a whole he had nothing but good to say, and he was a fisherman of wide experience.

Is one tempted to claim too much excellence for brothers of the angle? Yet they have special reasons for being excellent. That open-air life which is so good for the body is surely no less good for the soul. Fresh air and sunshine—about the best medicine in the world—where can you get a better tonic? The gay meadows, the rippling river, the rising trout, now and again "a shining reward of patience," all these help to gladden the heart and fill it with loving kindness.

"Halcyon daies by murm'ring streams."

Richard Jeffries went so far as to say: "The hours that the mind is absorbed by beauty are the only hours that we really live, so the longer we stay among these things the more is snatched from inevitable time." Happy fishing, an antidote to depression, helps one to realize that one's future does not lie behind one. "When the air and water taste sweet to you, how much else

will taste sweet!" as John Burroughs said in "Pepacton." It has been said that any man is a lad who is younger than himself. If there is anything more likely to confer this gift of youth on a man than a love of fishing, I have not yet come across it.

The sport has its lights and shades, of course. If it rains hard all the time the angler is out, and if he is soaked, and if he is a rheumatic subject, and if he has had no luck at all, then the shades are apt to be sombre for the time being. Still, even then, the philosophical mind can turn it all to account by enquiring, "Can fish laugh?"—a problem recently suggested in an evening paper. There is no lack of employment for the mind in the capture or attempt at capture of fish. The keen, wet-fly fisherman has to try all the likely spots, and sometimes even the unlikely, for trout. It is well to apply to trout fishing the remark of a digger about gold prospecting, viz.: "You can't tell anything about gold, you're just as likely to find it where it ain't as where it are!" To men of apparently inexhaustible energy, fishing is a joy: it appeals to them, not only as a rest but also as that "change of occupation" which has been recommended to active minds.

The late Colonel Sir George Farrar, Bart., D.S.O., one of the busiest of men (he crowned a patriotic career by giving his life for the Empire and his adopted country in the campaign in South-West Africa), used to find his greatest domestic happiness at his beloved Bedford Farm, near

Johannesburg; at Chicheley Hall, his English home at Newport Pagnell; or at his old home in Bedford (where lives his aged mother, loved by all who know her); but, for a day of recreation there was nothing he enjoyed more than sea fishing in Durban harbour from a boat with Lady Farrar. I remember that he once had a Saturday with the trout on the Wemmer while the South African National Convention was sitting at Cape-town (early in 1909), and he got two brace, which he instructed me to take with his compliments to the late General Botha. The General, pleased with the kindly thought, wished me to thank the angler, adding with that pleasant smile of his: "And tell Sir George I hope he goes again!" That day on the Wemmer there were three of us fishing—Sir George, the late Mr. McLean and myself. Mr. McLean was for many years the general manager in South Africa for the Union-Castle line, and he did admirable work on behalf of trout acclimatization at the Cape. Early in the afternoon, just after landing a trout, Mr. McLean stopped fishing, and looked heavy with thought. I asked him why he had stopped. He replied, "You see, I have caught six trout." "Well?" I said. "The fact is," he explained, "six trout is the limit." I do not actually remember, but I grieve to say it is possible I said "Well!" again, in a suggestive manner; for he at once remarked: "Yes, but, you see, *I myself framed that particular regulation!*" And the good man fished no more that day.

A great many professional men are keen fly-fishermen—and especially doctors and barristers. Their trained minds and observing habits get to work almost unconsciously when out with rod and line. They revel in the open air. I have a pleasant memory of watching a famous London surgeon beside the Colne at West Drayton. He had in his landing net a three-pound trout which he had just caught on the Mayfly, and was looking as happy as a schoolboy over it. "There is," wrote John Bickerdyke, when angling editor of the *Field*, "so much delicacy with science involved in angling as practised to-day that I venture upon the dangerous assertion that of all the sports angling is followed by the largest number of men with refined tastes, and thus, perhaps, it is that so many professional men, particularly doctors and clergymen, are enthusiastic fly-fishermen."

Piscator non solum piscatur, as the motto says. The angler has, and uses, the chance of studying nature, field and hedgerow, the things that grow, the animals that move, the birds that fly. As he waits for the rise to begin, or pauses after a capture, he will perchance see flashing by "kingfisher blue, bird of the sunlight"; or some small bird will alight by the waterside, have a series of brief baths, then fly away with an air of "feeling much fresher now"; or, perhaps, if all is still, the angler may see a throstle engaged with a huge worm; there is a final shake, the worm is swallowed at one gulp, and there follows that look of triumph, which says quite clearly, "There's

an art in that!" In the summer, too, he may see baby moorhens swimming about, like little balls of fluff. Rats, rabbits, stoats, snakes—there are plenty of riverside acquaintances to be met, and with great good luck even the shy otter is a possibility on the edge of dusk.

Nor is the pleasure of fishing over when it *is* over, so to speak. What can be more enjoyable than the long winter evenings spent in putting tackle to rights, and at the same time having brave sport in the river of Auld Lang Syne, following it yard by yard until one comes to that lovely tributary which joins it on the right bank and is called the Golden Future? Be the angler of retentive memory, and a wise traveller on the road of looking-forward, he will have many goodly rises. To the old warrior this way of armchair fishing is pure delight. Even the rheumatism twinges a little less shrewdly, it is hoped, as he remembers how he landed the three-pounder late one evening by the mill weir, or that other, bigger still, which rose under the alder bough by the footbridge just as he was about to wind up for the night. Through the grey fog of memory experiences like these stand out, and it is well to keep them and their associations ever fresh, with a lively hope that the future holds even better things in store. In this is Youth.

To the young angler I would say: Get, and keep, some good photographs of the river scenery where you have spent delightful hours. It may be, it probably will be, that one day you will

leave the old home and the little river for longer than you care to think. That is Life. But as you journey through the wilderness, there will be many a happy pause by the wayside if you have mementoes in the shape of photographs of the old scenes and of the old friends. I remember in the Anglo-Boer War, during a four-hours off on sentry go, finding in my haversack a little photo of the river Tern at Market Drayton. This occurred at Van Reenen's Pass, on the borders of Natal and the Orange River Free State, in 1900. I remember, too, how the idea came, there and then, to set down in writing some random thoughts on fishing. In due course they appeared in the *Field*, a little harvest from the seeds of Chance.

Especially, I think, a man will cherish his photographs if duties cause him to be in city pent, in some huge town, which contains little to remind him of running rivers, golden meadows, and the smell of the country. It may be that after settling down in the city you can never permanently leave it. But each succeeding visit to the country, with its few days of fishing happily provided for, will bring back the old sweetness, the old ease and peace of mind, the old joy in living, and each hour spent in turning over the leaves of the fishing album will to some extent have a similar result. For man has two precious gifts, memory and imagination.

"Red Spinner" in his preface to his "Waterside Sketches" in 1885, reviewed briefly the

march of events in the angling world since 1875, and said: "Anglers have multiplied exceedingly." What must be said now? The answer is: The number of anglers in 1920 is greater than ever it was. During the war, books on fishing were sent out in large numbers to men on active service, and to this fact a London fishing-tackle maker, with whom I was having a chat, attributes in part the many additions to the anglers' ranks. This fact also is partly responsible, in his opinion, for the present comparative scarcity in the supply of angling books, though of course during the war the making of sporting books had to give way to sterner work, and there have been few new books on angling for several years. Several large London second-hand bookshops report a brisk demand for angling books. Customers divide these books into two classes: the strictly technical, and the descriptive and reminiscent. The book which combines the merits of both kinds seems sure of a demand. Books on the art of fly-tying were in especial demand throughout the war, such a subject being a rare relief to the mind in monotonous spells or spare moments. British prisoners in Germany were keen on these treatises, "so that they might spend the weary hours of captivity in making flies against the day when they would again wield a rod."

Some of the favourite books on fishing awaiting reprint soared in price, a notable instance being Lord Grey's "Fly Fishing," published

originally at three shillings and sixpence. This book, I was told, could not be bought in September, 1919, under thirty-six shillings. Since then, happily, a new edition at four shillings and sixpence, has been printed.

Another proof of the demand for fishing was given to me when I began to inquire about accommodation at hotels commanding fishing rights. All over England, Wales and Scotland it was the same. Throughout the fishing season of 1919 practically all these hotels were full. Never before had the fishing inns been so well patronized. At a hotel on the Cornish border a hundred applications were received at Eastertide from anglers who could not be accommodated, although the landlord made a practice of engaging additional sleeping quarters outside. The only chance of getting quarters at fishing hotels was to write two or three months in advance. Early in the summer I was lunching at a famous restaurant in the Strand, when a stranger sitting next me suddenly but courteously asked if I could recommend him to a comfortable, old-fashioned English inn, with a river by it, where he could rest a few days. The question was unexpected, but it was easy and pleasant to tell him of such a place, in Shropshire, a charming, easy inn, where the food is good wholesome English fare, where the silver shines, where the linen has lain in lavender, where the sober-flowing Severn is alongside, and you can sit out on the lawn, or roam abroad in flowery meadows, with the Wrekin, one of the

most notable hills in England, towering benignly only a few miles away.

He was delighted. He gave me his card and I found that he was a distinguished official of the Canadian Government. He had come over on privy council business, and he wanted to see mid-England. Twice he wrote to the inn. But, alas, twice he received courteous replies, with the regretful burden "full up."

It was the same everywhere. In a Wiltshire village, where the Avon glides, "my kingdom for a room" seemed to be the cry. In a large Worcestershire hotel by October, 1919, every available room was booked for Whitsuntide, 1920. Good trout fishing, pretty country, and comfortable quarters evidently are now an irresistible attraction, and if anglers were plenty when "Red Spinner" wrote the sentence I have quoted, they must to-day be as the sands of the sea. "The fascination of it" is proved.

IN THE WEST COUNTRY

"Oh, we'm come up from Somerset,
Where the cider apples grow."

FRED E. WEATHERLY.

III

IN THE WEST COUNTRY

I

A Glimpse of the Barle

SIX days' C. O's. leave meant transition from a London depôt, surrounded by bricks and mortar, to the rich valley of the Barle. Although it was mid-March, winter in that year of grace was loth to let go its grip—witness the bare bushes, the sombre-hued woods, the beech fences still a determined brown. But the bleating of lambs, the singing of thrushes, that indefinable feeling of approaching spring, told a gladder tale.

A forenoon start was made just by a bridge, one corner ivy-clad. The morning still was dull and gloomy, and prospects seemed poor ; yet all this mattered not, for it was the old, old sport, and good it was to have rod in hand once more, to feel again the swish of water against waders. "Very early for waders," the wise man says. The justice of the observation is admitted. But the Barle, far from its source, is big as well as

busy, and wading, when cautiously undertaken, helped one to reach good spots. The cast consisted of blue upright, February red, and heron's wing. Scarcely had a start been made before the sun, as if impatient of restraint, burst through the clouds. Out came immediately a hatch of blue duns, and up rose the game little trout. Soon one rose to the blue upright, and was safely landed, the first trout of the visit. Then two, three, four, five more came to the basket; all from practically the same spot, and all in good condition. On most rivers, these trout would have had to be returned; here, the quarter-pound trout is indisputably takeable, and on the table, prepared in the true west-country manner, it is a delicacy which the guests are not slow to demolish. It was chiefly the blue upright that was fancied by the trout that day. Indeed one ardent angler lower down had, I found, three of these flies on his cast.

To me, most happily engaged, presently came a Somersetshire youngster along the bank. He seemed to be specially interested in the brand new pair of waders. "Do them things let in the water, zur?" he inquired. The reply was a stout negative, qualified by an inward hope that the many brambles and briars by the riverside would be kind enough not to prove me a liar. That hope, alas, was later disappointed. Even here, in this remote and peaceful valley, came a quick reminder of the convulsions in the outer world. For the lad's next words were: "My brother, zur, is one

of the best fishers in these parts, but he's in the Navy, now." Afterwards he said, with great good-will, "There be 'lovely fishing' below the bridge, zur."

"Lovely fishing"—what joy in the hearty statement, as compared with the languid "not bad." I am reminded of the pedestrian, in the long ago, who lost a good ride through want of such heartiness. "Have a ride, neighbour?" said a passing driver. Instead of a downright "Thank you," the reply was an indifferent "I don't mind." With a prompt "No more do I," the vehicle went on, leaving a wiser if sadder pedestrian behind. My young friend watched me for some time. A smaller trout was hooked, landed, and returned to the water. It pained the lad. "That trout was zeven inches, zur," he remarked. If that was a keepable fish, I wondered what the maid at a Kennet hotel would have said to it. When, not without pride, I came back one July evening in 1916 with a fish of 1 lb. 7 oz., goodly to see and fat as butter, and asked for a plate to lay it on, she observed: "Why, that's only a small trout for about here." One lives and learns.

Touching the size of the Barle trout, it may be noted that a day or two previously an angler had captured three weighing 23 ozs., and these were reckoned good-sized fish. The average appeared to be four or five to the pound.

The blue upright continued to prove first favourite that mid-March week, and next perhaps came the half-stone, though the February red was

not scorned. Hackle flies were preferable to the winged ones. In spite of snow-water, a sharp frost, and an occasional north-east wind (when that is in possession of the skies, you can profitably leave the Barle), sport during the week was, on the whole, good.

The six days' leave was soon up, but not before the accuracy of the boy's statement about the lovely fishing below the bridge was confirmed.

Incidentally, I heard a striking tribute to the dry-fly man. Some one said to the landlady of the hotel that the Barle had too fast a current for the dry fly. Her reply, crushing though courteous, was, "Oh, but some very clever dry-fly fishermen come here, and they catch the largest trout."

It was with thankfulness for restful days that I caught the London train back, hoping that the dry-fly men would live up to their reputation, and continue to win favour in mine hostess's sight, and that the wet-fly brethren would not fail to go on picking up their quarter-pounders here and there, and that they would improve upon the size and perhaps even rival the dry-fly men. In any case I hoped that one and all would enjoy lovely fishing by, below, above, and between the bridges. For the abundant good-will of the kindly folk who inhabit these parts sends a grateful visitor away in the most altruistic frame of mind. I had had, as it were, but a glimpse of it all. Had circumstances allowed those six days should have been sixty. Perchance in the future I may be able to work off the other fifty and four.

STEAMS IN DARTMOOR

II

Days in Devonshire

"Oh, you beautiful land,
Deep-bosomed with beeches, and bright
With the flowery largesse of May."

Alfred Noyes.

DRIVING in a jingle (pony trap) through Devonshire lanes on a day in April or May, you realize you are on holiday. You may choose the superior car, but for Devonshire by this mode of locomotion you get there too quickly. The old pony in the jingle has long made up his mind on the speed limit.

In Cairo I came upon the advertisement of a Devonshire rural hotel in a home journal which spoke of trout fishing. It included "health and economy." It promised "a land of streams." On the eve of home-coming it was just the influence to colour one's dreams. Devon lanes in spring, with carpets of primroses and harebells by the wayside! The rivers in the district had fascinating names—Thrush, Wolf, Lid, Carey, Tamar.

As soon as might be, headquarters were secured

at the little hotel, whose host was a real Devon man. They do tell, down-along there, of the reception which, when the war was still young, he gave to a young fellow who came to inquire about the fishing, and who loftily complained he had not received an answer to his letter. For reply the landlord, so the tale goes, gave him: "Us doesn't write many letters down here, these times, us doesn't, and what I wants to know is—why aren't you in the Army? There's the rivers down there for the fishing, and you can go and look at 'em for yourself!" The visitor went, apparently to look at 'em for himself. He did not return to the hotel.

The landlord, worthy man, was a study. At his remote hostelry, fishermen who had been in almost all quarters of the globe foregathered, lured by the trout. Welcoming the traveller, he would say: ". . . and breakfast's round-about a quarter-past nine, and if there's not enough just go in the kitchen and help yourself!" But there was always enough, and to spare. What a change it was from the rush and bustle of ordinary town life. The guests composed just a large family party, a laughing family party. If you are hearing the Devon dialect for the first time, you will listen to the lilt. The meanings are clear, the expressions so quaint. A Devon gardener was asked by his mistress what colour the flowers of a certain plant would be, and he replied, knowingly: "Her never blooms, mum—her never do bloom! Her do climb up and

up, and us do cut 'un back—but her never blooms!" Strangers met and the process of improving acquaintance was almost immediate. No subdued whisperings took place at meal times there; no ecclesiastical solemnity brooded over the tables, as at one first-class, precisely-ordered hotel (the name of which neither wild horses nor tame shall drag from me), where the conversation seemed to be based on the theme, "I've come to tell you there is no hope of a reprieve."

Jolly days were those at that little Devonshire hotel. At first the trout you pick up with the fly in those western parts, fairly easily if the water is in order, seem very small; in truth they *are* small. Four or five to the pound is a good average. But you note their capacity for fight, their first-rate condition, even in April. Gradually, the noting turns to appreciation. There is no sluggish, somnolent water in the rivers hereabouts, on the Cornish border. Hard by is Dartmoor, and the Dartmoor-born rivers carry their early turbulence throughout the greater part of their careers. So, of course, the trout fight like demons.

One of the most successful of the anglers took pains to catch a natural fly and got some artificial flies tied to resemble it. The result was a variation of the blue upright and it proved very killing. Other flies which I found useful on the Cornish border were March brown, Maxwell's blue, Maxwell's red, blue upright, pheasant's tail, Wickham's fancy, and coachman for evening.

For experiment I tried a coachman in the middle of the day and early part of the evening on the Tamar. Both my companion and the keeper on that stretch of water thought I should do much better with one of the other flies ; but I stuck to the coachman, fished wet, chiefly in the stickles, and as it claimed about a dozen trout, each about a quarter of a pound, I was quite content. Afterwards, I heard that later in the year the coachman had done well in the daytime.

In addition to the rivers named, of which the Tamar and the Thrush seemed to me the best, there was the Inny, a bright little river a few miles beyond Launceston, where a day or days may be had at a small daily or season charge on association water. The old pony in the jingle asks kindly to be excused these long distances, and admittedly on a journey like this the car or motor cycle is invaluable. The Inny, except where it is open water, is a much-bushed stream. One young officer, just home from France, made casting under and around these trees a speciality. Full panniers were his reward. On the Tamar I met him again and he was at his old game. This time he had a colossal trout (for Devonshire), a good half-pound, perhaps more. "I lost four lengths of good gut before I got him," he said, confidingly. That was the secret of his success, his determination. In the place which he had been fishing it was no wonder that the branches had claimed four of his casts. But "stick it" was evidently his motto, for at last, with his fifth

length of gut, which he had patiently put on, he got the artificial fly over the rising trout and so won the victory. He struck me as one of those real Britons who, alike in war and sport, play the game and simply will not be beaten.

The Tamar is a river of fine attributes. It holds not only good trout, but salmon in season, and also grayling. In the fishing season, however, all depends upon the state of the water. Rains soon tell their tale, and if there has been a downfall the Tamar is unfishable. It fines down leisurely. Visitors to the hotel where I stayed were enabled at certain times of the year to obtain, upon written application, a day's permit for a strictly-preserved length of the river. The Duke who grants this privilege through his agent thus confers a boon which is most gratefully appreciated. The day I had, though the water was not quite right, yielded a nice basket of trout, and the scenery by the riverside almost persuaded me that I was in Scotland.

It is curious that from this welcoming, hospitable shire of Devon should have come the only adverse comment of its kind I have ever heard about visiting fishermen. "The idle rich who come trout-fishing!" was what one resident had to say about us. He overshot the mark in imputing riches to most of us. As for idleness, he might have had the generosity or the common fairness to admit that trout-fishing is at all events an innocent and a wholesome recreation. But the hinting or sometimes hissing of dispraise,

the occasional tendency to "crab everything," the disposition as it were to walk into the sweetest dairy and pronounce some of the freshest milk a trifle sour, let us hope that all this is merely a passing phase, an aftermath perhaps of the gigantic upset caused by the war.

It seemed strange, though, that so ungracious a thing should be said of peaceful fisherfolk, a good number of whom that year were officers on leave or demobilized. Abuse, working overtime, is not likely to be constructive or helpful. The shortsightedness of it, too, in this particular instance, is obvious.

In South Africa and New Zealand they use their wits to advertise for and to attract visitors, even for the trout fishing, and, as regards London, South Africa will probably do more advertising of its trout fishing. Overseas authorities know that the more people they win the more business is done in their country. It is the same with villages. It means money brought in, it causes interchange of ideas. It denotes progress. Angling, too, is one of the busy man's best recreations, whether he be rich or poor. Happily, nowhere else in all the counties of England and Scotland, where I had the good fortune to fish before going overseas again, did I hear any ill-natured comment. The one quoted was, in fact, an isolated remark. Indeed, in the very village where the stern critic lives, the kindly, human welcome shown to angling visitors was enough to show that his view was shared by no one else.

Before finishing this chapter, I told a sage lady what had been said about trout fishermen. Her observation is comforting. "I can't quite see," said she, "that a man who goes trout-fishing is idle." It is unnecessary to add anything to this.

OVER THE BORDER

"There is much comfort in high hills,
And a great easing of the heart."

GEOFFREY WINTHROP YOUNG.

IV

OVER THE BORDER

THE enterprising Englishman penetrates into many lands, and by reason of much travel he may come to regard them all more or less as a matter of course. Let him, however, for the first time cross the Border into Scotland, and if it be daylight I warrant he will sit up and be pleased to take notice. The Scots have a very beautiful country. They have, moreover, a character which perhaps owes something to that possession. They have attracted attention, commanded respect, the wide world over. They are the same abroad—thousands of miles away—as at home. What more refreshing, when conversation is of the Old Country in, say, an overseas mining community, than to hear about the "pur-r-ple heather-r" in the good Scots tongue. How happily the accent clings! They are a wonderful people, these Scots. There is no room for argument. That they are the salt of the earth even themselves agree! Who says they haven't humour? That libeller cannot have visited them in their native heath. They are a serious folk, but, when they have a mind to

mirth or to give expression to some humorous fancy full of insight and point, the enjoyment is the greater for the contrast. I remember, when in Dumfriesshire, seeing a farmer driving a cow out of his garden—goodness only knows how it had come into the garden—and I said: "You'll have to call her 'Maud'." Immediately he went one better. "I'll have to call her 'to order'," he responded. And in another shire the good landlady at the inn capped all descriptions of some bonnie brown trout which three of us fishermen had just brought in. The beauties made a goodly sight on the huge dish, and the onlookers gave the rein to their adjectives, "How beautiful!" "How pretty!" "What lovely trout!" and so on. Then spake our hostess. "Oo, aye! Besides, they're so useful for food." Humour begins early with the Scots. Witness the schoolboy who, asked to define "nothing," replied: "It's just when you've held a man's horse for him, and he says 'Thank you'." But let me get on to my narrative.

A night spent at Langholm was rendered interesting by a bit of fishing which I watched from the town bridge, overlooking the Border Esk, at the darkening. I was not fishing myself, but had paused on the bridge as one always does. Presently came two men, father and son. The son had just returned from military service abroad, and had settled down to work again in his native place. The sea-trout began to rise. The father, an old fisherman, was not going out that night;

NEAR THE BORDER ESK

[illegible] A [illegible] THE EVENING

but the son had seen. "I'll get a wee bit supper and hae a go for yon fish," said he, and away he went. In a quarter of an hour he came back, be-wadered, the complete angler. His rod was sixteen feet, the usual length for the sea-trout men there. An ordinary trout rod of say ten or ten and a half feet, is considered too short for these wide rivers, and is genially termed "just a whup." Besides, the angler may have to do with a salmon, which makes him esteem a long rod.

The quarter of an hour during the son's absence gave me an understanding of the father's pride in his soldier son. Between them, obviously, was sympathy, understanding. From the bridge we could see the angler casting, and presently "I'm in him!" came up to us, "That means he wants me with the net," said the father, hurrying off to help. The sea-trout, a fish of about 1lb., was soon landed. It is somewhat of an event for an onlooker on a bridge to see a decent fish landed below, from a well-threshed river. Many spectators who pass without witnessing anything more exciting than constant casting, must sometimes wonder if fish ever *are* caught.

A few miles lower down the Esk, on the Duke of Buccleuch's private reach, one day a few years ago a passer-by over a certain bridge on the Canonbie-Langholm road, at the right time, would have had some excitement, for—according to a graphic description given me one Sunday afternoon by a Scot on this bridge—the

Duke himself, "frae this verra bridge, hookit a big saumon, and, what is more, he catch't 'um!" The spot where the gillie climbed down to gaff the fish was pointed out.

My journey took me next day from Langholm to Canonbie. From Canonbie you can fish both the Border Esk and the Liddle on payment, and sport can be had with salmon, sea-trout, and the herling, if the water is right; though that's the rub with all big rivers. Brown trout there are also, but it is the sea-trout which is chiefly sought, Canonbie way. You see or meet the enthusiast principally at the darkening, which, in the summer, seems longer delayed the farther north you go. Very acute are sea-trout; so are these Scottish anglers. If they don't get any, then nobody else stands much chance. From youth up they have known the river, an asset of inestimable value, and they have closely studied the habits of the fish. They are well aware that the sea-trout is unsettled when a storm is coming. After rain the fishers shrewdly make for the neck of the pool. Adept both with clear water worm and fly, they fish hard. They are out not so much to admire the scenery as to catch sea-trout. It is an eerie business, this sea-trout fishing at night, peering into the darkness, and casting, casting, in hope. But you carry on cheerily. Sometimes you are the recipient of a whispered, comradely greeting. If you rise a sea-trout, and get him attached, one of the bull-dog type with a touch of greyhound for speed, you will pronounce it

worth while. And in any event you will enjoy going to bed !

As the water was not right at the time at Canonbie, a move was made for brown trout at Tushielaw, near Ettrick, Selkirkshire. Here is an approach to the humorist's ideal of "trout-fishing, plenty of it, preserved, free." Adjoining it is the homely inn, capably conducted, where they know how to fry trout with oatmeal for breakfast. If your bedroom window overlooks the river, you can see the trout rising. The views you get, the health-giving air, the wholesomeness of it all, are worth the visit, apart from the trout fishing. And that, as I have hinted, is good. The Ettrick is not, in the nature of things, over-fished, because it is fifteen miles away from a town (either Selkirk, or Hawick in Roxburghshire). Men slip down from Edinburgh to Tushielaw for a quiet two or three days' fishing, for a brief respite in the open air. They leave their desks and their business cares behind them, fish hard all day, and then "in slippered ease" at the inn foregather, over maybe just a little "wine of the country." The trout run about half-a-pound, but with the water right you may get them three-quarters of a pound or more ; indeed, by the bridge at Tushielaw there lives, unless he has been caught napping, a two-pounder. The gamekeeper's son declared him to be nearer three pounds. Whatever his weight, this trout did much to encourage concentration. A Sheffield doctor burned midnight oil over him, as it were,

with no result other than leaving a cast of gut in an overhanging bough. It was retrieved in the daylight by the process of wading in and bringing the branch to hand by means of a hook fixed at the end of the long handle of a landing net—a useful weapon, by the way. I saw this trout several times. Once, with a long line from over the bridge, I had hopes of him. He did me the honour of inspecting the fly, but that was all.

The Ettrick is an inviting river in respect of its excellent bank fishing. Wading is useful, very; but without entering the water you can get a series of casts at almost any spot near Tushielaw. One of the best evenings I had there was when I was fishing without waders from the bank. Here and there the banks are steep. You can either cast from the opposite side, running the risk of blunting your hook by repeatedly hitting the gravel, or you can creep along the high bank up stream—and throw up close under it. Either method answers on the Ettrick, so the angler need not necessarily take waders, *but* if he likes them he will be able to use them to advantage. As regards flies, the ordinary wet-fly patterns at the right periods may be relied on, but the teal-and-claret and the woodcock-and-hare's ear are particularly good. A motor-car, a motor-bicycle, or even a bicycle would be found of great use for reaching distant spots ; but without such aid plenty of trout fishing is to be had practically at the inn door.

Quiet, broken by—or rather enhanced by—the call of the curlew, is in that vale, through which runs the clean, wholesome water of the Ettrick, bordered by its high hills. To those who value seclusion when fishing, as many do, this valley must appeal strongly. They need entertain little apprehension of being "ghosted," as one writer calls it.* Only once, when at a far end, was I interrupted. I was wading in the river at a point where a hedgeless track ran alongside. Suddenly a greeting came: "Good morning, sir; hope you are having good luck!" The voice came from a man of the road, a pedlar, evidently, for he had upon his shoulders a pack full of wares. He was bright-eyed, looking hale and hearty. It was a quiet interval, and I was not displeased for communication with the outer world thus to be restored. Instinctively perceiving this and scenting business he said persuasively, "I saw you fishing down below, yesterday, sir, but I did not like to speak to you." He was now willing to make up for lost time. Asked whence he came, he replied: "Owd'um." Invited to enumerate his wares, a quick look of pleasure appeared on his face. He was now doing Business. Soft-collar fasteners promised usefulness. "The price of these collar fasteners is threepence each," said the merchant, adding confidentially: "And you would have to pay sixpence each for them in many places." Two collar fasteners, at threepence each, were purchased,

* Major G. E. Sharp in "Fly Leaves from a Fisherman's Diary."

and the old man went off, walking away with a "Good morning, and thank you, sir." He was one of the world's business men, who do not stop to praise the goods, the bargain once struck. It had been a pleasant little transaction, with a touch of the unusual about it. Wayside scenes like this, when we get just a little underneath the surface, lend colour to life, add something of human interest. The collar fasteners were useful, even if severely plain, and perhaps had a certain young, immaculately-dressed, brother officer, when reporting at an officers' course, only worn one of them, he might have escaped the greeting he got from a superior :—"Good morning, young man, haven't you forgotten something?" Looking himself up and down, the Tudor-cum-Plantagenet one replied, "No, sir, I don't think so," only to be overwhelmed with, "Haven't you forgotten your ear-rings, young man?"

Good trout fishing is to be had in a loch, Clearburn, about three miles from Tushielaw. The use of a boat is not allowed in this loch. When on its banks, at certain spots, you have to be careful of the going because of the soft peat. Andrew Lang has paid a memorable tribute to Clearburn and its quagmires.

Tushielaw is only three miles from Ettrick, where the Ettrick Shepherd was born and where his remains are buried. In the Fly Fishers' Club in London is a reel, underneath which is this inscription:—"This fishing reel formerly belonged to James Hogg, the 'Ettrick Shepherd.' Pre-

IN THE VALLEY OF THE ETTRICK

sented to the Fly Fishers' Club by Mr. J. F. Carruthers Bell. July, 1905."

A little over five miles away from Tushielaw is St. Mary's Loch, where Sir Walter Scott, Christopher North, and the Ettrick Shepherd used to foregather.

AWAY TO WESTMORLAND

"When I went down to Winster,
Full fifty years ago,
The vale was filled with blossom,
Wild cherry, and the sloe ;
But the grace of all its graces
And the charm of all its charms
Was the snowy damson blossom
About the fell-side farms."

A Correspondent of the *Times*.

V

AWAY TO WESTMORLAND

SHOULD you be in Milnthorpe, it is not far to the Vale of Winster. This countryside, vast in area and thinly populated, has about it compelling charm. Bowness, Windermere, the Lake District generally, happen to be comparatively near : and how many visitors Lakeland attracts, in spring, summer, autumn, can in part be estimated by the unending procession of motor charabanc, motor-car, motor-bicycle, bicycle, streaming through Milnthorpe. They are almost all bound for the Lakes. Milnthorpe village, therefore, has life about it. But, as a hotel proprietor at Bowness said : "The good people of Milnthorpe merely see the people passing through. *We* get them !" Bowness's superiority, ultimate triumph, were settled in that spoken word.

At Milnthorpe, standing at a corner of the main road, you see Lancashire mill-hands, from all parts, one would imagine, of the industrial hive, in those motor charabancs, which carry twenty-eight passengers. A massive vehicle, your

charabanc, yet it apparently travels light. Motor-cars pass perpetually. Some are going perhaps further than Lakeland, maybe into Scotland. Family parties, often with a curly-haired chubby-faced little one nestling in mother's arms, revel in the motor run, the fresh air, the good fun of it all—except, perhaps, when the petrol gives out, and even then this entrance into Fairyland must preserve the paternal temper as its owner makes his way to one or other of the local garages for fresh supplies. Motor-bicycles, with the familiar side-car, whizz past. The possibility of accident is avoided, or at any rate reduced to a minimum, by the presence of an Automobile organization's official on point duty at what would otherwise be a dangerous corner. Travellers appreciate him, long a central figure, for not only does he direct traffic with the skill of a London policeman, and with the same confidence give the signal to proceed, but also has he proved himself an encyclopædia of knowledge on highways, by-ways, and short cuts over a large area. This is his business, and he has been well chosen for the job. He seems to be a director of ceremonies by instinct.

That main street of Milnthorpe might be termed "a miniature Hyde Park Corner." I remember, when after South-West Africa I spent a short time again in Johannesburg before coming to London, a lady who had just returned to the Rand from England, was talking about the war and said sadly, ". . . and they just seem to have forgotten how to smile in England!" I thought

of those words last August at Milnthorpe. Those Lancashire lads and lassies on their way to Lakeland seemed to be rapidly re-acquiring the art of smiling. Merry England was, I thought, recovering itself. May the diagnosis be correct. May it be richly confirmed, for ever and a day!

One feature will inevitably impress the visitor to Milnthorpe and its neighbourhood. In the church, as in the churches of Beetham—where the roses were rioting—and of Heversham, was a roll of honour, telling how the lads had squared their shoulders, put on their packs, and gone—gone to the happy warriors' everlasting reward. These three scrolls of history meet the eye straightway, and compel, if not a military salute (how reverent is that military salute given by surviving comrades, who have been through the fighting themselves), then a baring of the head, or at all events an eloquent pause. In all my wanderings in England I saw no tribute to the beloved dead more beautifully paid. This simple commemoration, majestic in its meaning, thus carried out in the churchyards of three parish churches, all within a radius of a few miles, must help to impress the minds of generations to come.

* * * * *

On the Bela the trout were rising. They were, indeed. But that does not mean they found their way into the creel. It was in the early part of August, a time when trout are not responsive. This does not necessarily imply that the Milnthorpe fish were sluggish. On the contrary, they

were active. They rose, and kept on rising, fore and aft, right in front of you. But with the artificial fly, dry or wet, they would have no dealings. One of the most exasperating days I ever had was on private water on the Arrow in Herefordshire, one August. Then the trout rose determinedly, but scorned the artificial fly. I did make a small bag on that occasion, so I can honestly say that things were worse, much worse, at Milnthorpe. In a fortnight's fishing, I think only two sizable brown trout rewarded me. I am no Stewart, but I *do* reckon on most days to get, like the average man, just a few trout, something at any rate to go home with. Here, however, blank followed blank. It is true, the water was low, true also that some local anglers, who in the previous two or three years had nearly always done well, confessed to being able to do little or nothing now. But the fish went on rising! They made a perpetual challenge. Fly after fly was tried, but it was all the same. The river was full of trout, and even though one could see no fly on the water, the rising went on steadily. What *were* they feeding on? I tried a specially made-up local cast, with negative result. I even went to Lancaster and secured a special fly, which I thought must attract, especially under the bushes, only to be told on return to Milnthorpe: "Oh! we've tried that fly; it's no good!" During an afternoon or evening, after fishing hard, with never a rise or only very short ones, I would sit down and mop my fore-

head, owning defeat. I began to understand the frame of mind of the angler who hurled his fly-book into the water, crying fiercely to the fish, "Take the lot, you brutes!"

No; one could not get really angry! There was nothing to do but laugh. This time the trout were scoring. Birds were singing freshly, lovely glades sloped in the richly-wooded park, and there was a herd of fleet-footed deer. With such sounds and sights one could not but rejoice in the surroundings. And when, defeated by the fishing, I returned to the village, there was a game of bowls to be had on Milnthorpe bowling-green. For a small charge, visitors are allowed to play. The bowling-green gives good company. People sometimes speak slightingly of bowls—"Oh, that old man's game!" I seem to remember that Drake played a game of bowls on Plymouth Hoe when time was pressing. If he was "an old man," he did very well considering!

There was another compensation, last but best of all, for the bad brown trout fishing. The sea is at hand, and not far from the mouth of the river is a weir-pool. Sea-trout were coming up, and I went down to meet them. The water was too low at the time for them to ascend the weir; and at times they settled down—that is, as much as sea-trout ever can settle down—in the weir-pool. Public paths run alongside the river here. Usually a fisherman, when seriously engaged, likes his own company only, but by this pool the spectators seemed somehow part of the

programme. They apparently enjoyed the proceedings, and the pleasure was reciprocal. For the most part they kept well away from the banks, the vital matter. And in the cool of the evening it was a pleasant sight to see the lads of the village squiring the maidens along the meadows. Darby and Joan came too. It was a favourite spot for the youngsters who, on their way to or from a dip in the sea, were always attracted by the sight of a fisherman. With hushed voices they would come nearer and nearer, until a bolder one would inquire about the sport. One intrepid youth came up, at something like a gallop. Then he waltzed round me. I stopped fishing, interested in the lad. Looking up, he asked eagerly: "'An yer catched any?"

For sea-trout flies I used the local patterns left over from Dumfriesshire, and they answered. One angler, however, succeeded with a small trout fly. For gut I first tried 4X well soaked, but after the furious fight a sea-trout gave on it I was glad to revert to 3X, and did well with it, though nothing of any great size came my way. A London friend of mine sticks stubbornly to 4X gut in all winds and weathers for trout and sea-trout. He takes his risks, and often takes the trout, and the sea-trout too. But it is fine gear. With 3X one feels that there is a sporting chance should something beyond the common be hooked. Sea-trout fight very hard, and where they run big, of course, they want something more substantial than drawn gut.

BY SEVERNSIDE IN SHROPSHIRE

"Of the beauties of England, perhaps no county contains a more interesting share than Shropshire. It possesses every variety of natural charm: the bold and lofty mountain; the woody and secluded valley; the fertile and widely cultured plain; the majestic river and the sequestered lake."

NIGHTINGALE: "Beauties of England." 1811.

VI

BY SEVERNSIDE IN SHROPSHIRE

SHROPSHIRE does not monopolize the Severn, but the river runs through a goodly share of the shire : cuts it in half, as it were. Those who have lived long by Severnside would not like to leave it. It has become part of them, they will tell you. They have known it in spring,

> "When nothing that asks of bliss
> Asking aright is denied,
> And half of the world a bridegroom is
> And half of the world a bride."

And when :

> "Summer glows warm on the meadows and speedwell and goldcups and daisies
> Darken 'mid deepening masses of sorrel, and shadowy grasses
> Show the ripe fruit to the farmer and summon the scythe and the haymakers."

They have known it in autumn :

> "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
> Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun,"

And in winter :

> "When the valley's hushed and white with snow."

Except for the dampness which comes on foggy, unfair days, or for the slush which a fall of snow brings, it is a joy to them all the year round. Mother Nature, it has been said, loves loyal admirers, not mere fair-weather friends, who gush over the joys of spring and early summer, and then bemoan dark days. She is credited with a deep affection for those who, with the seeing eye, perceive also her autumn tints, the wonders of a late October, and for those who do not forsake her even in winter and can see with joy during the short hours of sunshine the dazzling lines of a range of hills, such as Stiperstones or Longmynd under the snow. When can you see so sharply defined, as on a clear winter day, the gnarled boughs of a trusty old oak or the delicate traceries of elm or silver birch ?

Shropshire folk have an abiding love for their historic shire. Meredith has put into words for Salopians something of what they feel on returning to their country after much wandering, and passing through the old familiar fields in summertime, when he wrote of a scene elsewhere :—

> "Joy thus to revel in the grass of our beloved country ;
> Revel all day till the lark mounts at eve with his sweet tirra-lirra :
> Thrilling delightfully."

The Severn is still reckoned a great salmon river though it yields little sport to the rod. Time was when good bags of trout were registered ; now, you have to work hard—in

Shropshire at any rate—for a brace. The fish may be of good size, though. Two, each well over three pounds, were captured by spinning one day in 1917, near Cound, which is between Cressage and Atcham, and they now adorn a wall at Cound Lodge behind honourable glass. Grayling find the river much to their liking where it has sandy, gravelly beds, and in some years, as in 1913, quite good sport with them is reported. Of coarse fish, pike, perch, chub, roach, dace, there is a good stock.

"You have learned many things, my friend, but one thing you have not learned—the art of resting," to quote a passage from "The Intellectual Life." If any busy man is keenly desirous of acquiring this vital art, a July day in Severnside meadows ought to help him. If there has been no freshening rain, fly-fishing for trout is out of the question, except early or late in the day, so one may potter about—

> "Any man that walks the mead,
> In bud or blade, or bloom, may find
> According as his humours lead,
> A meaning suited to his mind"

—and enjoy the fresh air and the smell of the country; taking, in short, the cue from Darwin, himself born at Shrewsbury in 1809, when in a letter to his wife he wrote: "At last I fell asleep on the grass, and awoke with a chorus of birds singing around me, and squirrels running up the tree, and some woodpeckers laughing; and it was as pleasant and rural a scene as ever I saw,

and I did not care one penny how any of the birds or beasts had been formed."

If you must fish on a July day, the fly-rod may be taken out, but in the full glare of the sun it will probably be in vain. There are other branches of the art, however. Maybe, a roach swim by a sheltered bush suggests a little old-fashioned bottom-fishing. When you approach the spot you will often find that some careful old Severnsider has already been there. You may see signs of him in the depressed grass and that stake, forked like a catapult, on which the roach-rod has rested. Roach or dace or chub, attracted by gentles that are on the hook may cause the red-tipped float to stab the water; or the bold-biting perch in an adjoining pool may have a go for the worm. In any case you are fairly sure of attention from the gudgeon, busy but not required. Nay, if a passing pike-fisher is live-baiting, he will be glad of a fresh-caught gudgeon. And, if you have enough of them, a dish of gudgeon fried in bread crumbs is not to be despised.

Unless something exceptional happens, Severn fishing on a warm July day is not taken too seriously. But the old pipe will smoke gratefully. And landscape values, as the artists calls them, will be noted, and this or that meadow-scene be regarded as subject fit for a memory picture.

In autumn and winter Severn roach-fishing has many devotees. At Cound on two days

about mid-December, 1919, when the river was fining down, a Birmingham angler, from whom the early bliss of handling rod and line seemed not to have departed, secured, of roach, dace, and chub, a bag of forty-three, mostly of respectable weight, gentles being the lure. No mere "bait-drowner," he was an old hand. With an eleven-foot rod, he used 3X gut, and a line hardly thicker. He kept almost as far from the bank as the trout-fisher throwing a fly. When he dropped the line in, he let the bottom end of the cork-tipped porcupine quill enter the water perpendicularly, and very gently. He was a model of quietness, as are all good roach fishermen. A friend of his, roach-fishing at Bewdley one frosty February day, saw a robin from the bough of an adjoining tree settle on the top of his rod.

Severn pike cause numerous bereavements amongst the trout, and therefore when the clever spinner comes he has good wishes with him. Those who like live-baiting for pike in the season will generally do well all along the Severn with a lively dace or gudgeon on snap tackle.

It is true that in Shropshire the river cannot be acclaimed as a trout-full river, but the fish are to be picked up here and there, and for delightful days in the country the Severn valley ranks high. Looking from the heights whence can be seen on the one side the Wrekin and on the other side the Caradoc, well may the lover of this land say :

> "Peace lives again : that she may long live here,
> God say Amen"

Three and three-quarter miles from Shrewsbury, and a comparatively short distance from Severnside, is the site of Uriconium (Wroxeter), a Roman city, which was destroyed by the West Saxons, A.D. 584. It is said in olden days to have had the beautiful name of "The White Town in the Woodland." There is still much of interest to be studied amongst the ruins.

You can wander and wonder among the ruins of these Roman cities. And there is a romantic fascination about following some old, forgotten, straight Roman road. Had one, perchance, some remote ancestor among those mighty Romans, who were in Britain for centuries?

Between Wroxeter and Shrewsbury is Atcham, where close to the parish church is an imposing bridge over the Severn. In Capetown one afternoon I saw a picture of this scene hung on the walls of an Adderley Street café. It brought me back to Severnside in a trice. The proprietor, it seemed, was a Birmingham man, and he told me that he happened to be at a party at Shifnal on the night in 1883 when news came of the tragic death of Captain Matthew Webb in his daring attempt to swim Niagara Rapids. Webb was a Shropshire man, and his sister was at that Shifnal party. She resolutely refused to believe the message. "Matthew could never be drowned when swimming," said she. Her words showed what a pride in him those had who knew him best. Alas! the message was true.

Shrewsbury itself, if history appeals to him,

will keep the sight-seer occupied, and within a short train or motor journey is Ludlow, whose castle is a gold mine to the antiquary. The Feathers Hotel at Ludlow has been a hotel since 1656. A sixteenth-century poet, Churchyard (1520–1604), wrote of Ludlow :—

> "Who that lists to walk the Towne about
> Shall find therein some rare and pleasant things."

Admiration of Shropshire scenery found expression, a short while back, in a rather unexpected direction. In a sincere, warm-hearted letter, informing the officials of the County Court circuit, which covered a large part of Shropshire, of his impending retirement (occasioned by promotion to the County Court Judgeship at Westminster), his Honour Judge Sir Alfred Tobin, K.C., put on record his regret at leaving the people of Shropshire, its hills and its valleys, *and its rivers*. Travelling from town to town, as his judicial duties necessitated, he had been able to appreciate the rivers, and his grateful reference to our kinsfolk, hills, and rivers made good reading for Shropshire folk at home and abroad.

The county of Salop can pride itself on one very old man ; for the Chapel of Great Woolaston contains this inscription :—

"The Old, very Old Man, Thomas Parr, was born at the Glyn, in the Township of Winnington, within this chapelry of Great Willaston, and Parish of Alberbury, in the County of Salop, in the year of our Lord 1483. He lived in the Reigns of ten kings and queens of England (viz.) : King

Edward 4th, King Edward 5th, King Richard 3rd, King Henry 7th, King Henry 8th, King Edward 6th, Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, King James 1st, and King Charles 1st. Died the 13th and was buried in Westminster Abbey on the 15th of November 1635, aged 152 years and 9 months."

A TRIBUTARY OF THE SEVERN

"Every river that flows is good, and has something worthy to be loved. But those that we love most are always the ones that we have known best—the stream that ran before our father's door, the current on which we ventured our first boat or cast our first fly."

HENRY VAN DYKE: "Little Rivers."

VII

A TRIBUTARY OF THE SEVERN

THE Tern is only a little river. Yet it must always be *the* little river. For it is enthroned in memory as the wonderful water into which a tiny tot in a meadow near Pell Wall Hall, Market Drayton, threw a buttercup, which was instantly seized by a monster trout, a creature which bulked more like a whale. And it was the still more wonderful water which yielded an eager lad's first trout.

The Tern ran within view of the old home at Market Drayton, and at night the music of the waterfall by the valley mill could be heard, bringing its own tranquil message. Early on a summer morning just after sunrise when all the world is still an impulse to get up was rewarded by the sight of the little river shining like a multitude of diamonds ; for in those far-off days just on the other side of the Newport-road bridge was a reach of miniature, trout-haunted rapids. These rapids have now disappeared, and hereabouts the water flows evenly and quietly, never forgetting that appointment at Atcham, near

Shrewsbury, where Tern joins Severn. Few pedestrians pass over that bridge at Market Drayton without proving the soundness of the second of the two well-known objects of bridge-building, which are : (1) for getting across rivers ; (2) for pausing and looking over parapets at the water to see if the trout are rising.

Matters important in the history of Old England have been enacted by and near Ternside ; and through the generations Staffordshire and Shropshire men from these parts have gone overseas to some purpose. "Clay lies still, but blood's a rover."

Seneca advised : "Where a spring rises, or a river flows, there should we build altars and offer sacrifices." If you want to build an altar or offer sacrifices at the source of the Tern, you will have to go into Staffordshire, to a spot called Blackbrook, near Maer, a few miles from Newcastle-under-Lyme. Hereabouts the coaches used to run, Whitmore way. The Black Brook meanders until, widening, it becomes the Tern. One of the places of note in this district is Willoughbridge Wells, at the lawn-foot of which is a wishing-well, enclosed within four short, weather-seasoned walls. Here you see crystal-clear water, which used to be highly esteemed for medicinal value. In the large pool here a few years ago the American brooktrout, *Salmo fontinalis*, which is not common in England, lived and flourished, as it well might in such cold pure waters.

A little further on, the Tern expands until it

does important work at Bearstone mills. Thence it proceeds past Oakley Hall. The late Colonel Sir George Chetwode, who lived here many years, served in the Crimea and in the Indian Mutiny. His son, Lieut.-General Sir Philip Chetwode, won his D.S.O. in the Anglo-Boer War, and distinguished himself still further in 1914–1918, in the European and Palestine warfare.

At Oakley, a flourishing farming district, rare specimens of Shropshire sheep are bred, and from one of these Oakley farms went out into the world, thirty odd years ago, a farmer's son to make his fortune in business. After a successful start near London, he and his partner boldly invaded Oxford Street. The wise father feared his son might lose the money he had already made ; but the son proved wise also, and the Oxford Street establishment now is one of the shopping sights of town.

A couple of miles from Oakley, and not far from the hamlet of Mucklestone, is the site of the battle of Blore Heath, fought in 1459 during the Wars of the Roses. Here Lord Audley was slain, and the battle-cross erected to his memory is to be seen to this day. The victors had feigned flight, and on reaching a summit turned sharply upon their adversaries—when the latter were in the Valley. Great was the slaughter that day ; tradition has it that Hemp Mill Brook ran for three days with blood. At Betton Old Hall, Queen Margaret slept the night before Blore Heath battle, and, when the next day had gone

against her army, she rode to Eccleshall with horse-shoes reversed.

From Oakley, the Tern goes past Tunstall Hall, a stone's throw away from which is Shifford's Grange, where in the old days great cricket matches took place. Could the old scoring books be unearthed, such family names as Broughton, Twemlow and Warren, would be found in them. Tunstall Pool gives me a memory worth recalling. It was then about 1886 that during an otter hunt Willie Tayleur, eldest son of the squire of Buntingsdale, "tailed" the otter, a feat requiring both pluck and skill. A little lower, and Tern is near Peatswood Hall, where is one of those lovely lakes inseparably associated with the stately homes of England. In skating seasons, the lads and lasses disport themselves on the great sheet of ice at Peatswood, bordered by trees whitened with frost.

Under outstretched boughs, the little river pursues its course—some big trout can be seen here when the Mayfly is on—until, passing Tyrley Castle, it flows under the Newport-road bridge. Looking up, you see Market Drayton Parish Church, whose tower was climbed by Robert Clive when a lad. Had he tumbled, the Indian Empire might not have been ours to-day ; at any rate, history would have been different. He was born at Styche Hall (near Market Drayton), a peaceful home, where you can "hear the thrushes singing in the lilacs round the lawn." Shropshire folk look with pride at his statue in King Charles

Street, S.W., in the City of Westminster; and, again, at the other statue in the Square, Shrewsbury.

> "Our share in England's glory
> Is famed in song and story;
> Clive and Hill and Benbow—
> All are living mem'ries yet,"

as Mr. W. Herbert Smith says in his stirring song of Shropshire, "All friends round the Wrekin."

The Newport-road bridge is associated in my mind with one of the exciting incidents of boyhood. I was fly-fishing and had got a lot of line out behind, when I hooked something unexpectedly. The something proved to be a cow, and the fly had a solid hold. The animal dashed across the stream, where it was shallow. It was not a case so much of paying-out line as of the cow helping herself. She got across the river—she wanted playing!—and continued her career in the meadow opposite, towards Phœnix Bank. When the end of the line was reached, snap went the gut. I have often wondered what became of the fly.

Turn up the Newport road and you will come to the village of Hinstock, whose one-time rector, Canon Ellerton, wrote some of the best-known hymns in Ancient and Modern, including "The day Thou gavest," "Now the Labourer's task is o'er," and "Saviour, again to Thy dear name we raise." These hymns have been sung the world over, wherever the English language is spoken. I heard the last hymn one Sunday evening in

Khartoum Cathedral, and it carried me back to Shropshire on the wings of melody.

Further along the Newport road, at Chetwynd End, is typical English woodland scenery. Hither every springtide, in order to see the hawthorn and the may, used to walk from Newport the late Mr. Charles Horne, M.A., father of the late Rev. C. Silvester Horne, M.A., M.P., pastor of Whitefield's tabernacle.

Coming back to Pell Wall, I remember how the grounds of this mansion were periodically the scene of the annual local flower show, when, in the cool of the evening,

> ". . . many a rose-lipt maiden
> and many a lightfoot lad "

danced merrily on the lawn. Many of those lads went away on or soon after that fateful Fourth of August, and some of them . . . the roll of honour . . . the cenotaph . . . the glorious dead.

Market Drayton itself is rich in history. In his fifth book of "Pilgrimages to Old Homes" Mr. Fletcher Moss reminds us how the effect of the first Edward's iron-handed rule was felt there. At Market Drayton were born the father, and the grandfather, of a great official, whose writing is very popular, in fact warmly welcomed in every home, none other than Sir John Swanwick Bradbury, G.C.B., late Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, whose name became a synonym for the twenty and ten shilling notes bearing his

signature, "John Bradbury." Sir John, who subsequently was appointed Principal Reparations Commissioner for the British Government, was himself born at Winsford in Cheshire.

Market Drayton inspires loyalty in its sons. A famous journalist, who in his earlier days had visited Market Drayton on an important occasion, in some reminiscences written years after from London, either described it as a little town, or referred to a village street, I forget which. Market Drayton's population in those days was roughly between two and three thousand, though now it is considerably more. My father, who had the greatest love for and pride in the old Shropshire town, was indignant that it should have been so belittled. It was "a town";—aye, the best, the only, town in all the world to him, though he had been overseas. This pride of birthplace or scene of settlement is at the root of national pride, and one likes to see it. I was reminded of my father's attitude by that of the worthy landlord of a fishing hotel in another town, containing about two thousand people, a delightful spot, but not what you might call "rapid." He had motored me to an adjoining town of about three times its size. When we were coming away from it, I remarked its wide street and substantial shops and said: "Quite a big town, this." "Yes," he admitted, adding confidentially, "but I should not like to live here; *it's too slow; very slow!*"

The Tern from Market Drayton elbows its way near the foot of Salisbury Hill, where

Lord Salisbury encamped on the eve of his victorious fight at Blore Heath; and on to Buntingsdale, whose squire is an experienced fly-fisherman.

Stoke-on-Tern, a couple of miles further on, was formerly the most peaceful of hamlets; now it has an aerodrome. The river winds to Crudgington, Longden-on-Tern, and Walcot, by many a peaceful home, and through rare meadows, and flows on its unabated course, always gliding past, yet never gone, always the same little river (except when the great floods come), until it has completed its business at Atcham, where it merges its waters into those of the Severn, and so makes for Bristol and the sea.

As I have tried to show, the Tern is a good trout stream and it holds some big fish here and there; I have met them once or twice, and the first was that monster of my boyhood. It was a brief affair though, all over in a few seconds. I was in a kind of trance, conscious only of a big trout at the end of a long line rolling about on the surface. But last year, about thirty years later, and not far from the same spot, I "had one on," and lost him. It was in August, a little earlier in the evening than the rise usually begins. I saw a heaving of the water ahead, and I thought a cannibal trout was chasing minnows. When I came to the place I threw, the fly fell, and, hey presto! here, there, and everywhere was a trout dashing about. The rod was a stout one, the tackle sound, so there was nothing to fear on these scores; but the weeds were heavy

and numerous. Once he got into them, it would be fatal for any chance of securing him. Therefore I applied pressure, and determined on a desperate plan: I got the landing-net ready, so that by giving him short shrift I might tire him, or if he should providentially lie on the top of the weeds I *might* by chance very quickly get the net under him. But it turned out otherwise. True, he was kept clear of the weeds, but, after a minute's palpitating excitement, he leaped a yard or so out of the water: the hook came away! After so many years' fishing, one has learned to keep fairly cool when playing a fish, but this affair was just a little too much. My heart seemed to have left its usual latitude and longitude and to be carrying on somewhere near a rib on the right side. Well, well: the trout was off, but I *would* have liked to know its exact weight. On the same river, I once caught, as described elsewhere, a trout weighing three and three-quarter pounds; the weight, length, and girth were all ascertained. But this lost trout is all conjecture. What weight was he? I am sure he must have been in the neighbourhood of four pounds. Even if he had topped four pounds he would by no means have been a record for the Tern; for instance, Mr. F. C. Woodforde, formerly head of the Market Drayton Grammar School, got one weighing over five pounds on the Stoke Grange length.

WEEKS IN WORCESTERSHIRE

"The town in the orchard."
(Queen Victoria's description of Tenbury.)

VIII

WEEKS IN WORCESTERSHIRE

IN the Sudan one day a Worcestershire man spoke of the charm of the Teme valley. So far away, these home references impress the listener. Hence, one day in October—this month being prime for grayling, first cousin of the trout—Paddington was the tryst for three of us. The big railway strike * was just over. Neither of the two companions, one a plumber from Deptford, the other a cartage contractor from Rotherhithe, had done any grayling fishing. They were ambitious to learn but wished to begin, in the old-fashioned way, with worm or gentle. For fly-fishing they could wait, said they. Above all, a holiday in the country was their desire.

The humorous is a happy ingredient in any care-free holiday, and the railway journey early supplied this ingredient. The C.C. had thoughtfully provided bait in the shape of meal worms. Do not scorn them : the bird shops sell them eight a penny. These he had put in a tin. In the hurry of packing he had clapped the tin into

* 1919.

his top-coat inside pocket. Little holes he had made at the top of it. These proved not little enough. Suddenly, a fellow passenger, pointing to the C.C.'s shoulder, remarked, "Hullo! What's that?" A meal worm had crept out of the tin, worked its passage *viâ* the inside of his top coat, and was now determinedly proceeding towards his collar. The C.C. hurriedly opened his coat. A hundred other meal worms, emulating the pioneer's example, were a-roaming; the inside of the coat was a living mosaic of the creeping creatures. However, the trouble was soon over, the passengers in the meantime having shown their sympathy with the C.C. by uncontrolled laughter, in which he joined.

Looking out of the carriage window outside Birmingham, the plumber saw black belchings of smoke from chimney shafts and observed: "Gorgeous colouring there," whilst the C.C. solemnly inquired: "Is this Bermondsey?" After leaving Kidderminster—"Kiddy" they call it for short—our attention was turned to the golden glory outside, trees yellowing, hedgerows mellowing, "all owning the hand of autumn." For the first time in this part of England, these good men enjoyed it with the hearts of little children. From them came no blasé utterances, such as the fashionable "Not bad" or the superior "It's much finer in the . . . ." And when Wyre Forest was reached it seemed as if the trees which are missing from the waste, barren spaces of the earth had been compressed

into that marvel of woodland. At Bewdley we espied from the carriage window a Severnside angler plying his art. To our cheery shout of "Good luck!" he waved his hand happily, and beamed a big smile in response. As we progressed towards and along the Teme valley, the eye took-in orchards, with apple trees leaning low. Sometimes the lasses were carefully picking: sometimes for want of hands the apples had rolled in heaps. Here, Herefordshire cattle browsed in the fields; there, the ploughman was at work with his willing team; and hillside trees as a background were limned against the sky.

Arrived at our destination, on the border between Worcestershire and Shropshire, we heard the usual tale—water had been low all the season. Time allowed an hour's attempt on the Saturday evening in the Teme. Each of the two bottom fishers saw his float go under twice, and could not come to terms with the biter. This stirred their blood. With the dry fly, the green insect, I myself fetched up an odd grayling or two, but all came short.

On the Sunday morning, it was soothing to hear the sound of church bells wafted across the river, and a walk in the country further revealed the beauty of this part of England. Said the cartage contractor, "It's a relief from looking at drain pipes and bricks." Said the plumber, "If I had suddenly found myself in some foreign country and seen this scenery I should have said 'it beats England.'"

On the Monday we had a good half-day at the fishing. The cartage contractor soon got into trouble with his float, but the saving grace of humour impelled him to suggest a visit to one of these good-natured farmers "to borrow a milk float." The plumber was happy: "Oh, I'm quite at home, plumbing the depth; it keeps my hand in." No luck came to the share of either. No merry stabbing of the water, no disappearance of the quill, took place this time. The cartage contractor, in rendering his report, was sparkling, "And I had given the fish my telephone number, too! Being now in a brewing county, I thought it appropriate—'Hop 2386': it seemed a sure way to get 'line engaged.'" Neither was downhearted; each looked to a glorious morrow. The grayling were lying at that season chiefly in the tails of the fords, and, as bottom fishers are restricted to the bankside, it is difficult for them to get the best spots. But there was no lack of fish, for the Teme is an ideal stream for grayling, and is well stocked with them. My efforts with the fly proved unavailing for some time, though an occasional fish came short at me. Two fly-fishermen passed. One had done nothing: the other had three brace, though "coming short" was his verdict, too.

But at length my blank was broken. Off a shallow a good grayling, though not rising, was to be seen, and, as soon as the dry fly, a pattern as much like a red quill as the box supplied, fell over him, he made an upward dart, and the rest

GIVING THEM HIS TELEPHONE NUMBER

was easy. Although the fish turned the scale at 13 oz., and was in prime condition, with the famous cucumber odour when landed, yet it showed no fight to speak of, which was strange for an inhabitant of Worcestershire or Shropshire. Happily, this grayling proved quite the exception, for the others fought finely, as the autumn wore on, and as the winter frosts invigorated their condition.

In Tenbury, the town in the orchard, as it was royally described over eighty years ago, anglers have regard for the grayling, and on the table they esteem it highly, preferring it apparently to trout. But last autumn the Teme was low; indeed, our friend the oldest inhabitant declared that not since 1864 had the water been so thin. Consequently, the grayling were not sporting much, as those homely Devon and Somerset folk say of their trout. Still, on most forenoons in mid-autumn they rose to the natural fly for a time, and again also an hour or so before sundown. For the most part, however, they disregarded the chance of excess rations offered by artificial flies, and continued to do so until a thorough cleansing of the water occurred. Broughton's fancy, pale watery dun, green insect, red tag are good dry flies, but, although grayling like low water, when it had been low so long it was all against the angler. One conviction which I gained on this trip was that, however late you may strike your rising trout, you can scarcely be too quick for grayling. The second

you see a movement towards the fly then go in for a lightning strike, even if you do not know what is going to happen. It occurred to me about this period (October, 1919) that railwaymen ought to be good at this kind of fishing.

What of the plumber and the cartage contractor? The P. plied his bottom fishing diligently, and at last a jubilant "I've got a grayling!" brought joy to the bankside. Alas! that grayling did a quick change into a 1 lb. chub, a fish for which boots at the hotel had a liking. He was made very welcome. The C.C. a little later called for a landing net. He had on a good grayling, which stuck to its colours, and the C.C's. honest heart throbbed with pride and delight. It was the first fish he had ever had on, let alone caught. Ah, that was premature . . . that fatal slack line! But afterwards he said that he had learnt a useful lesson.

One surprise was in store. The P. said, diffidently, that he would so like to be able to throw a fly. Therefore one ripe October afternoon on the Ledwyche he was rigged up with fly-rod and line, without a cast. The elements of instruction were given to him, and the result was excellent. Usually with novices the line gets there in penny numbers, and is picked up like fire brigade hose. For thirty years has one seen the same good old mess made of it. But this time, with the Deptford plumber trying his 'prentice hand as fly fisherman, everything seemed to go right. With rod well up, the cast was

made well behind, then a momentary pause, then with a turn of the wrist—all from the wrist—the line went forward, followed by a clean pick-up, body still all the while. Steady practice showed no deterioration. This was a case worth cultivating, so the following day he went into waders, with fly-rod, tapered line, tapered cast, dry fly, and all complete. It was just the same. On the Teme he handled the 10-ft. rod lovingly. Gradually, more and more line, but never more than he could control, went out; the fly dropping like snow-flake. The grayling he rose he lost—one must have been a pounder, which broke loose near the net—and for the great event he was content to wait. No more bottom-fishing for him, he said, when fly-fishing was available.

Only once before have I seen a novice with a fly-rod shape so well. That was in Natal, on the Mooi. He was a young, Colonial-born farmer, and, although his line did not fall so gracefully, yet he quickly got home, and in two days he was, unaided, playing and landing trout, one of them the best of the season. The last time we met was in South-West Africa, and you, John, were just the same good fellow you always were. Evidently you have kept up your fly-fishing, for here in London, just as this book is going into print, I have received a letter, written by you in Natal about it. It is so interesting that perhaps the reader will kindly let me leave the Teme for a few moments, in order to make two or three extracts. In your letter, John, you say: "I

want you to bring me out a fly-rod. I want a rod something like you used to fish with on the Mooi, only I want one with a steel centre, and about 10 ft. long. I don't mind paying up to £10. I would not mind a good second-hand rod if you happen to know of one. I shall leave it entirely to your judgment. . . . I cannot buy a rod here ; all the stores seem to have run out of rods." Well, this wonderful place, this "centre of intelligence," as London has been called, will be able to supply a rod, and pleased I am to act on your behalf, old friend. You go on to say (pleasant reading for an amateur from an old piscatorial pupil) : "I have done quite a lot of fishing during the last two years. I go to the Loteni River. The fishing there is better than the Mooi. I shall take you there if you come to Natal for some fishing." That's just like you, John! Thank you. You proceed in your letter : "I have been quite envious of your fishing in Scotland ; it's one of the places I want to go to." That is only natural, for your grandparents came from there to Natal in the early days and your great uncle, a Scotsman, was a distinguished professor, who edited a dictionary.

To return to the Teme valley and the novice from Deptford. Here was a man born and bred in a foggy spot, where streets, houses, and chimneys are the surroundings. Possessing what proved sheer natural aptitude, he had for weeks previously paved the way for an angling holiday by devouring every scrap of angling

literature he could ; he had with great content read "Red Spinner," R.B.M., H.T.S., the Amateur Angler's "By Meadow and Stream," and Van Dyke's "Little Rivers." I take off my hat to the Deptford plumber.

The C.C. is already contemplating buying a little farm with a little river on it or near by, and he threatens to stick to angling until he becomes a really good bottom-fisherman. Then, he says, he will, with country contentment, no longer contract but expand. So we may in time find him a fly-fisher too.

ON THE FORDS OF TEME

" Thy tastes become a lady fair,
Thou lov'st the pure and crystal stream
Whose waters ripple brightly where
Old ivied fanes reflected gleam,
And in clear depths, inverted show
The bankflowers where the bee doth feed,
Or 'neath whose currents lushly grow
The tender greens of waving weed."

COTSWOLD ISYS, in "Lyra Piscatoria."

IX

ON THE FORDS OF TEME

HAVING family and business responsibilities at their respective homes, my friends from Deptford and Rotherhithe at the end of a fortnight had to leave Tenbury for the town on the Thames, and I felt lonely without them.

With water low, as indeed it had been so long, they had not had much chance of sport; yet they had been happy every day, every hour, of their holiday, and their sense of enjoyment communicated itself to all round about them. They left just when heavy rain had been falling. With the water now fining, and with prospect of sharp frosts, the grayling would be sure to come on the feed. Verily, in three days or so, sport began. Two other angling visitors came—from Stroud, in Gloucestershire—but as soon as the Teme looked "topping," as the modern phrase has it, one of them had to return. The other was luckily able to stay two days longer, and one of these we spent together on the association length.

So far, I must confess that, though I had occasionally employed the dry fly when necessary, the wet fly had appealed to me more and I regarded myself as first and foremost a wet-fly man. But now I began to feel the genuine dry-fly enthusiasm, though far be it from me to institute comparisons or to dogmatize as to preferences. On this point two golden sentences from that charming and highly educative book Lord Grey's "Fly Fishing" may appropriately be quoted. "I have," he says, "at various times started in my own mind so many theories which have been suggested by experience and afterwards upset by it, that I do not desire to press anyone to accept an opinion unless there is anything in his own experience which goes to support it. There is only one theory about angling in which I have perfect confidence, and that is that the two words, least appropriate to any statement about it, are the words 'always' and 'never'."

Touching dry-fly fishing, he sums up the art in these words: "The effort, in short, is to make the trout notice the fly without noticing anything else. It is in this that the fine art of dry-fly fishing consists." Obviously the same principle applies to grayling, though of the two fish the grayling is far the less shy.

The time the visitor from Stroud and I had together by the waterside that day, from early forenoon until 4 o'clock, had its sparkling interval. During those days the wise thing was to be at the waterside soon after breakfast. Early in autumn

THE HAUNT OF GRAYLIN

10 a.m. is a good time for beginning, later 11 o'clock, or even midday, will be soon enough. One can go on fishing as long as there is any encouragement to do so, maybe until dusk in mild weather. If the season is not too advanced and if the water is right, grayling are almost sure to rise cheerfully at some time of the day. If they are not rising, and you wish to fish, then put on the wet fly (three flies if the river suits); if on the other hand they are rising, then fish dry. Why, the grayling then are calling to you! Sometimes a particular fly must be used, if any business is to be done. Sometimes practically any grayling fly, especially when tipped with a dash of colour, will attract them. But you never know. The grayling is a challenge to study. You think you understand this game fish, and then you realize that you are contemplating a mystery. That is, perhaps, why the grayling is called the Lady of the Stream.

That morning the Stroud angler had started at the far end of the association reach, in the Newnham Bridge direction. I had gone a little higher up, to within sight of Boraston Church, with its quaint spire. I had done nothing. When I had worked my way down I saw him, bewadered and in the water, supremely happy. Grayling were rising all around him. He had struck a gravelly ford such as the fish love. Already he had a nice bag, and he deserved it, for he cast his short line very prettily. The grayling sometimes missed or refused the fly, but they kept coming.

He would have been a good study for a "Picture of a Happy Grayling Fisherman."

"Put on a green insect!" said he, briefly, in a moment snatched from business, as it were.

"Thank you," I said, "I will," and I did. Hurrying on I came to a likely ford, established myself at its tail where the deeper water was beginning, and where a short line was not only valuable but also imperative. And then I had an hour of rare delight. Perhaps the sport which I enjoyed, good though it was, was not the chief part of my enjoyment. It was quite as much the behaviour of the dry fly, the green insect, that kept me rapt with attention and appreciation. The fly sat the water, now like an imitation of a greatly reduced hedgehog, now like a miniature busby! However absurd the two comparisons, they are what that floating dry fly, that green insect, put me in mind of at the time. The current was rapid, and, as soon as the fly alighted on the water, off it went! I positively laughed with enjoyment. Then all of a sudden a grayling would glide up from the bottom like a ghost, and maybe it was hooked—maybe not. It mattered little. Moreover, it would probably come again. When in the humour the grayling will rise several times to the same fly. It was a busy time, and, when the rise was over, I left the ford, still chuckling to myself. That was a good day. The rise was not a long one, but it was brisk while it lasted. We both got a bag, the man from Stroud a bigger one than I.

Grayling are gregarious, and once you are at a spot where they are at home you can get amongst them, taking one after the other. The Stroud man got his fish all from one reach, and probably did not move more than ten yards.

Good sport continued daily, and my fondness for the dry fly increased. On four special occasions in former years had the dry fly impressed me, though I had previously always fished wet, and as a fact preferred it—then. Now I like both methods, each as occasion demands. One happy adventure with the Mayfly, fished dry, was on the Colne at Thorney Weir. A trout was steadily taking the naturals as they floated by under the opposite bank. I got my fly luckily across to the right spot, it floated over him, and he took it. I managed to keep a tight line, and to play and land him, 1½ lbs. The second piece of luck with the dry fly was on the same river, near the cosy cottage by the weir. Just on dusk I saw a trout rise, and soon a coachman, floating beautifully, was travelling towards him. I felt sure the fish would accept it, so attractively was it taking its course. And my faith was justified. The trout was mine. My third dry-fly adventure was on the other Colne, in Gloucestershire. It was an evening late in June. The water-bailiff sat on a stile, watching. But one does not mind the official presence when one's ticket is in order. A trout rose. A coachman was presented dry, and, as it neared the trout, it seemed so natural that the fish must surely have a go.

"I *thought* you'd get him, sir," said the water-bailiff.

My fourth triumph (I regarded each capture as a triumph then) was on the old little river, the Tern, at Market Drayton. A trout kept rising, but he ignored the wet fly, three times changed. Then I perceived that he was feeding on a small black gnat. Promptly I put on one, dry. Instantly the trout came to terms, and was landed. "That's what I call good fishing!" said some kind onlooker on the opposite bank. In point of fact, it was fair fishing, long delayed, for observation ought to have got to work sooner. But it is nice to put on record his generous words, as a set-off against certain unfavourable comments (doubtless deserved) that have come my way. Perhaps the most picturesque was that of my friend, the Major. He contemplated a knot which I had tied in my cast, and said, "What a knot! Are you trying to invent something to anchor a man-of-war with?" But one improves, and the Major is a just man. I am glad to be able to record that later he was constrained to observe, "Glad to see that at last you can tie a knot looking a little less like St. Paul's Cathedral."

I have caught other trout on the dry fly, but the instances recorded have somehow impressed me most, and I had not hitherto taken the business as a matter of course. On the Teme, however, one got into the habit of coming back with grayling, all taken on the dry fly; and, although

there was much to learn, much was learnt, about the grayling, it was dry fly that was "the thing."

Lord Grey, in his "Fly Fishing," says, "In fact the fly must float as if it were buoyant, cheerful and in the best of spirits—natural flies having the appearance of being very frivolous and light-hearted." This exactly expresses how both hackled and winged patterns took my eye.

In the same book the author has, of course, much more to say about dry-fly fishing, and he says it not only with knowledge and wisdom but with irresistible charm. As an Englishman, I pay my respectful and grateful homage to that great man for all—and it is very much !—that he has done for England and our Empire; as a fisherman—one who loves fishing—may I be allowed to thank him for that phrase about the dry fly, "very frivolous and light-hearted"? As a matter of fact, on the Teme, when the winged dry fly, with wings so primly cocked, sailed saucily along, the mere spectacle used to give me pure, wholesome fun. A brother angler tells me that the fat complacency of a big red pike float affects him in the same way. So I am not singular in the matter.

When the visitor from Stroud had to go, so good had been his company that I felt again the pangs of loneliness. And then, on the Saturday afternoon, as I was looking out of my bedroom window, whence I could get a good view of the river, whom should I see coming on his

motor-bicycle over the bridge but the Major—none other than my companion at Dulverton, Lifton, Longnor, Langholm and Canonbie? I sang to myself an anthem of thanksgiving. He had, it appeared, ridden from Devonshire to the Worcestershire-Shropshire border. Almost simultaneously with his arrival, there appeared at the hotel two other brethren of the angle. One was a Major who had lost his left arm (the result of one of his four wounds in the war), but was none the less one of the best fly-fishermen you would meet in a day's march. The other was a demobilized officer, whose cheery humour will long be remembered in the hotel. We had a table together, and when I listened to that trio, with their sparkling, boyish fun, I bethought me of the song which says, "For it's always fair weather when good fellows get together."

Fishing for grayling! We fished every moment possible, fished again at meals (and they were meals!) and fished again in the smoking-room. "How horribly monotonous must the conversation have been!" remarks a reader who does not fish, and I concede that there are other interesting subjects besides grayling. Still, the talk was not entirely about fins and tails, for even ardent fishermen cannot live conversationally on a menu of nothing but piscatorial instances. But I fear that, even when things in general were being discussed, there was a tendency for fish to creep in somewhere. As, however, all four were in complete sympathy, nobody was bored.

The grayling fishing was greatly enjoyed, and almost always at some time of the day—once it did not begin till so late as two o'clock in the afternoon—there would be a rise of fish. How good they were to eat! Of course all depends on their preparation in the kitchen, but there we could have perfect confidence. Hannah, the Welsh cook, was an expert. And the grayling were perfection.

Here may be slipped in a little fragment from "simple annals." I happened not to be fishing one day, but in the afternoon went for a walk, a pleasure in itself in the Teme valley on a ripe autumn day. In due course I came to the riverside to see how the Major was getting on. He had done well during the rise, and got several beautiful fish. On our way, as we were walking back, we met a neighbour of an old couple who had lived long in a riverside cottage, near Newnham Bridge. The husband had kindly given the men from Deptford and Rotherhithe and myself some information one day about the water, and in a little homely chat had told us that "his missus" was going to Kidderminster on the morrow for "a operation." He was well over seventy years of age. Their cottage faced the field where we began our fishing on association water, or rather it was near where that length ended. When passing during the next few days we saw the cottage shut up, the wicket padlocked, and a basin of milk, with a cat companioning it, outside the cottage door—neighbourly kindness again. It was clear that

the old man, like the true life-partner he seemed to be, had gone to see and cheer up his missus in hospital. She made a quick recovery, and, to the old fellow's joy, was comparatively soon brought back safely from Kidderminster, and able to rest on the sofa in the front room. Their neighbour gave us this news of them. The Major at once asked him if he would take to the invalid a brace of the freshly-caught grayling, a kind thought which was just like him.

On the table, whilst this is being written in London, are seven photographs of the Teme in the Tenbury district, taken either in October or November. All carry a message of woodland quiet, riverside peace. Two show the famous weir on the hotel length. Bordered by trees, the water falls over the weir in silvery relief. Both trout and grayling haunt the spot, which is a rare home for fish. Another has caught the wounded Major fishing. At this weir we watched him one afternoon get about ten trout and grayling—the trout of course being returned. We were both deeply interested. The photograph shows him to the life, with his intense keenness and concentration. As there were but few rises, he was wet-fly fishing with three flies, wading on the shallow. Rarely was there a surface rise to his flies, but he got his fish all right. They took beneath the surface without any sign, but he hooked them none the less. It may be urged that trout and grayling often hook themselves. They do. But that was not the explanation this time. The

secret was that the angler *watched his line* with the keenest vigilance. When there was the slightest check or movement, he struck. Even if a passing leaf (autumn leaves on the Teme are numerous) came in contact with his flies as soon as they reached the water, he struck. His argument was that if he waited for the point of his rod to bend sharply, or to feel the fish at the fly, it was too late for the strike. Results proved the wisdom of his contention. I have more to say of him in the next chapter, but here it may be said that he landed his fish by an ingenious method. When his trout or grayling was exhausted, he would stick the butt of his rod into a metal-bound leather socket attached to a belt; he was thus enabled to reel up, because the rod was now self-supported, and when the fish was played out and near enough for the purpose he would for the moment trust the rod to hold the fish by itself, detach his net, and so finish the affair. The net was slung so that it could be easily detached. Naturally if a friend was handy he would desire to act as gillie. The Major (of this book) and I both counted it an honour to serve in that capacity to so good a fisherman and fellow.

A MEMORY OF THE LUGG

"When the frost has wrought a silence."

"The Meres of Shropshire," by George Christopher Davies in "Anglers' Evenings."

X

A MEMORY OF THE LUGG

THE four of us had been offered a day on the Lugg and we felt ourselves fortunate and gratefully accepted it. We woke early to a frosty morning which was in itself a good omen for the chances of grayling. *Thymallus* likes a touch of frost at night. We started from Tenbury in a motor-car which was suffering from bronchial catarrh, but consoled ourselves with the thought that Hereford is a restful shire for travelling. We were well wrapped up, especially the Major, who has decided views about the English climate. He was covered by that massive sheepskin coat which, with his usual kindness, he had insisted on lending me for a car drive, one March day, two years before, from Dulverton across bleak Exmoor and back. This cold-resisting coat was the cause, he told us, of a picturesque little incident. Attired in it, he was standing not long before outside his hotel at Penzance, when suddenly a bright little eight-year-old girl danced up to him. "Oh, have you just come from Russia, please?"

"No, my dear," replied the Major, who,

though an old bachelor, is very human (between ourselves, I might even say susceptible). "What makes you think that?" he smilingly asked.

"Oh," said the little lady, "*we've* just come from Russia, and they all wear coats like that!"

Very pleasing are the friendly approaches of childhood. The world would be drear without them. It reminded me of a little memory cherished for many years. A little maid of some five summers one wintry Sunday afternoon was carrying and nursing a huge Teddy bear, almost as big as herself. I could not but admire the little fairy, all in woolly white, so devoted to her charge. She evidently caught my eye as it wandered from her to Teddy. She advanced toward me, and with great gravity gave me a piece of information. "*It's the first time he's been out!*" she said.

The fishing to which we were making lay beyond Mortimer's Cross, and the journey was delightful. People are apt to say of their country-side, "You should see it in the Spring!" But strangers may be quite content to see Herefordshire on a sparkling, frosty day in mid-November. We passed through such pretty hamlets as you will only find in rural England and noted many beauties. One building especially interested us. It was the school at Lucton to which "The Amateur Angler" went as a boy. Few writers have given more pleasure to angling readers than the late Mr. Edward Marston, who as "The Amateur Angler" described his fishing adventures

with such freshness and zest. As you read him you are with him all the time on the river bank. Two or three miles beyond Mortimer's Cross, the scene of the battle which secured the throne for Edward IV., brought us to our starting point. Close to a bridge was a stationary caravan, used as fishing headquarters, and this marked the end of our journey.

"Are you gentlemen in possession of a permit?" the keeper courteously inquired, and the production of the warrant, duly signed by the kind lady who had given us permission, eased his mind. He wished us good sport, with the comfortable assurance that there were grayling in the river.

The frost was still pretty keen and tying on flies with benumbed fingers was not easy. The Major, who lavished testimonials on "this climate," was the first to complete his equipment. Long service in the army perhaps helped him in this respect. His evolution as a grayling fisherman had been interesting. Before coming to the Teme he had done very little of it. He had caught a few, but did not think much of them, and had never considered it worth while to take them seriously. The Teme fishing, however, had fascinated him, and he now spoke of the graceful, gliding grayling with respect, even with admiration. He had experienced, and learned to appreciate, the fighting qualities of November grayling, braced by crisp vigorous weather. Always careful with his first cast, like the shrewd

fisherman he is, he now found the benefit of the habit, for while the rest of us were still finishing details, we heard his cheery announcement, "I'm in him!" His little eight-foot rod, kept well up and busy, was bending double, and we were uncommonly pleased to see him land a good-sized glittering grayling. It promised well.

Long experience has shown that, grateful as it is, a trout or a grayling, risen, struck, played, and landed to your very first cast of the day, is not a sure forerunner of sport. But you always hope that it will be. The omens on this occasion were only in part propitious.

It was not a blank by any means on the Lugg that day. Fish were caught in fair numbers. But there was one angler who had nothing to show for it. And here is the said angler audaciously writing a book connected with the subject! It served me right. Our kind hostess had given definite instructions: "If the grayling are rising, put the dry fly on; if they are not, then fish wet." The grayling were not rising. The three others faithfully followed the hostess's injunctions, and profited. I alone disobeyed and had an empty bag. The reason, I suppose, of my unwisdom was that fair success with the dry fly on the Teme had cast a glamour over me. I could not do without the amusement and pleasure of watching the dry fly sail along, with the succeeding fascination of tightening on a rising grayling at the right moment. I saw my fly sail along all right on the Lugg, but that was all. I

only got one rise in still, deep water at a bend. Whether the fish was trout or grayling, I do not know; but there was such a boil as to indicate a big one. Just before reeling up for the day, I put on wet flies, but repentance had come too late.

The Major had a fair basket. He rejoiced over one fish exceedingly—"fought like a trout!" he said. The other Major, the one-armed angler, also got several grayling. He fished with his usual keenness and managed his rod, net and fish with the dexterity which I have before described. It was a real pleasure to the rest of us that this valiant English gentleman, who bore his wounds without complaint, was able not only to hold his own in the matter of catching fish, but as a rule to do better than we did. The third member of the party fished hard and got a few grayling also. Only the fourth—but it was my own fault and I shall not complain.

It is two months since that day on the Lugg, and, although not a written note was made at the time, yet how clear is the scene, as I write in London. The purling river, the Major's "I'm in him!" the hillsides, the woodland, the frost-bound earth, the Hereford cattle, the great calm, and—"Oh! have you just come from Russia, please?" Kind hostess, here is a message of thanks.

THE ARM OF THE LAW

"Would you kindly show me your licence, sir?"

(Familiar question.)

"This is a very bad case."

(A water-bailiff to the writer.)

XI

THE ARM OF THE LAW

THEY have the Law at the back of them, these water-bailiffs, and the majesty of the Law is an imposing thought. Perhaps it is that which gives to water-bailiffs some of their quiet dignity, though the fact that they seem a race of naturally dignified men, is no doubt due in part to their living near Nature. Probably most of them have been keepers and outdoor men all their lives. Those who live much by meadow and stream, near copse and spinney, watching with open eyes the seasons changing in the procession of the year, absorb into their character something of nature's "bigness."

Sometimes the water-bailiff is a pensioned policeman, spending the evening of his days in the country, the professional instinct still alive. If he be a practical angler, or one who in his earlier days liked his little bit of fishing, and never has lost the love of it and its associations, then to anglers he is all the more interesting as a personality. To the retired policeman clings some of that official manner acquired during his

service. He is still an Important Person. Also, of course, he never loses the capacity of inspiring awe in wrong-doers, or the reputation for being "a man of his hands" which come to wearers of the blue. All that counts a good deal in keepering.

The roving days fitfully described in this book gave me opportunities of studying the water-bailiff and the keeper in various districts. When the president of a medical board at a military hospital near Portsmouth early last year said spontaneously and suddenly: "Do you like trout fishing?" the question thrilled me with anticipation. "Yes, sir!" I replied with the promptness of a good conscience. After service abroad in a climate so warm that the partition between it and a climate still warmer ("H.E. 2 sticks," the Major calls it) is, so the irreverent ones say, only a cigarette paper, it appeared that the best medicine was "open air and pottering about with a rod by a trout stream." So it proved on two months' sick leave, in Devon and Cornwall. Then when demobilization came in due course, and strength came with it, pottering about was promoted to active, regular fishing.

Wherever chance took me, there was the water-bailiff sooner or later to be found. Now, the peripatetic fisherman, wherever he goes—in England, at any rate—must take out a fishing licence if the river concerned comes under the control of a Board of Conservators. In addition, if the water or any part of it may be fished by

GOT HIM!

favour of an Association, he must secure a daily, weekly, monthly, or season ticket. There are, of course, Associations and clubs to which admission is not to be had for love or money, or in which vacancies only occur at intervals. To get into the best fishing clubs nowadays I fancy an infant ought to have his name put on the books the day he is born! He should at any rate make an early point of asking his father to look into the matter and use foresight!

Water-bailiffs are employed both by Boards of Conservators, and by Angling Associations, with waters to protect. Thus if you are on Association water, within the jurisdiction also of a Board of Conservators, you are liable to a two-fold visit, one from the Association's keeper, who will courteously ask if you have the Association ticket, and if not why not, and so forth, with the climax, "Will you please give me your name and address, sir?" and the other from the Conservancy bailiff, with his, "Will you kindly show me your licence, sir?"

It is no good explaining, when you have not the vital document, that you are only on a day's visit and that you already have a licence for the ——— river, not far away. He will explain, with precise geographical detail, that the river on which you are now fishing—caught red-handed—is not a tributary of the ———; that it comes within the jurisdiction of the ——— Board of Conservators, which is "an entirely separate body,"—these words are uttered in solemn,

judicial tone. You already begin to feel you will be taken forth from that place to be hanged by the neck until there is no more question of licence or anything else.

Then the worthy man, expounding in words with which he has long been familiar, goes on: "This here river comes within the jurisdiction of the ——— Board of Conservators, and before you can fish in this here river you *must* take out a licence to fish in it." Now, if you are a wise man, you will already have taken out the necessary licence, and done all things lawful. If you have by ignorance, or whatsoever the reason, omitted so to do you will, without waste of words, ask his worship if he has a book of licences on him, and if so will he of his kindness sell you one on the spot? As you scan him hopefully, you will notice that maybe he has grown grey in the service, that he wears hand-sewn boots, with smart leggings, not to speak of a jay's feather in his hat, token of an intimacy with outdoor life. Seeing what kind of man he is, it can do no harm to add that you are sorry for the trouble you have caused him, and would he kindly convey personally to the Chairman of his Board of Conservators an expression of your regret that you have unwittingly offended. Sometimes a water-bailiff, for convenience in remote rural districts, is empowered to sell the fishing licence. Clearly, it ought always to be taken out before you fish. But if by mis-chance this has not been done, and if the water-bailiff is empowered to sell

licences, and if he is given discretion—which he is not likely to abuse—then, when he is satisfied that no trickery is intended, he will in all probability sell you the licence on the spot.

But, if you defy the Law, if you began bandying words, or in any way transgress against the code of a gentleman, temporary or otherwise, then you are "for it." These water-bailiffs serve under important chairmen, with pretty blue blood in their veins, and, moreover, the Board of Conservators has a learned clerk to whom they report. They know a gentleman and a sportsman, and how he should behave, and frankly, and rightly, they will not have any nonsense. From instinct, discipline, and training they know how to do their duty, and they seldom make mistakes. I remember once conversing with a water-bailiff in a famous fishing district, a splendid man of the old school, and I asked him if ever he had trouble with fishermen. His reply was quaint: "No, sir, not as long as they take out their licence, and behave like gentlemen, and *agree with me*." Personality tells!

If in England and Wales you fished successively through the spring, summer, and autumn seasons, and visited a different river each week, you would come within the jurisdiction of a good many different Boards of Conservators, and would have to take out a good many licences. The cost of these licences varies, but it does not amount to much for trout-fishing in most cases, though a salmon licence costs an appreciable sum, usually

about £1. I did not incur great expense for licences. The Severn licence costs two shillings, and the possession of this document entitles you to fish not only the great river but also its tributaries. Taking out a Severn licence in the early summer, for fishing the Tern round about the old home in Shropshire for a few days, I put the licence away, thinking it would not be my fortune to need it again. But then I had a few days with the trout at Craven Arms, where runs the Onny. This is a tributary of the Teme, which in turn is a tributary of the Severn. So the licence served. It made me feel thrifty. Then, after visiting in turn the Manifold, in Derbyshire, the Border and Westmorland, I came back to the Tern, and once more the Severn licence came in. The long journeys seemed almost justified because of the saving on the licence! Then came my October visit to Tenbury, for grayling; another trip to Craven Arms, for grayling this time; a journey to Cound in late November—the Severn licence albeit getting a bit tattered franked me everywhere. A fragrant memory, by the way, is the last trip, brightened by the prospect of a chance grayling on the fords; by the anticipation of seeing old friends; by the lure of the cloud-effects in the Severn valley, which in winter seem to me more wonderful at Cound, with its wealth of woodland and fresh fields, than in any place I know, unless it be Richmond Park on a grey wintry afternoon with just an occasional glimpse of sun. Also I wanted to see once more

those richly-plumed wild duck in flight by Eyton Rock. I came to Cound all the more gladly for the recurring thought that already I held a Severn licence! But I did not get even a stray grayling. The water was beginning to run into order, and I had seen a good fish rise near Eyton Rock way, when down came the rain from the hills, as they say, and for a fortnight or so fly-fishing was impossible.

Instead of fishing, therefore, I turned to and wrote some of this book. The landlord and landlady of one of the homeliest, cleanest-roomed, brightest-shining, most-severely polished little hotels in all the United Kingdom, showed sympathy in my literary labours, and placed every convenience most kindly at my disposal. Soon, what with pages of manuscript and sheaves of notes, the trout were rising all over the table.

But I must return to my water-bailiffs from whom I have wandered. These functionaries come on you so quietly. The soft turf helps them. Usually you are so intent on your casting that the first sign of them to reach you is a cheery "Good morning, sir!" or "Good afternoon, sir!" If the water-bailiff is an Irishman, there will be added: "And it's good sport I hope ye'll be having!" It is all a preliminary canter; a sort of conversational *hors d'œuvre*, leading up to the *pièce de resistance*: "Will you kindly show me your licence, sir?" The nearest thing to the water-bailiff's quiet arrival on the scene that I remember was the advent of our Colonel, him-

self, by the way, not long ago happily converted to the gentle art. It was in a huge R.A.S.C. depôt, and he wore rubber heels, which made his approach, even on a stone floor, quite inaudible. Some of us, subalterns at that time, thus suddenly visited in our sections, were pleased to say (privately) that it was not quite fair! But that was many, many years ago—away back in the middle of the war.

At first, until you have had experience of the river, you may perhaps wonder who your charming visitor is. After the time of day has been passed conversation expands. He descants intelligently on the crops, discourses wisely on the news of the day. You wonder whether he is the squire's bailiff, just having a walk round the farms, or some farmer taking the air for the good of his health, and glad to pass a few remarks with a stranger. Then, as you think he is preparing to depart, and you begin to brace yourself up for a long cast to cover that rising fish on the other side, a slight change is to be detected in his accent, which assumes a velvety tone, as he says: "Will you kindly show me your licence, sir?" It insinuates, as plainly as possible, "I know of course a gentleman like you would not be fishing unless you had a licence, and I am asking only as a mere matter of form." The good man is doing his duty. The manner of his doing it reminds me how I once went to cash a cheque at a bank in Egypt. On presenting it, I said to the clerk, a stranger, "I have the money in the bank."

"Oh, yes, sir, I am sure that's all right," replied he. But all the same I saw him looking up the books. It is a sound motto for bank clerks, water-bailiffs, or anybody in a position of trust or responsibility, to take nothing for granted.

The first water-bailiff I struck—that seems an unfortunate word now I see it set down! but it is only the colonial word for "met"—was early on in Cornwall. The usual greetings took place, with the same "pleased-to-meet-you" kind of conversation, followed in this instance by a speedy plunge into the subject of licences. That proved all right. And then, as generally happens with a fisherman new to the district, there was a series of questions which elicited sound instruction as to the right size and kind of fly, the best spots, and so on. It necessarily takes a stranger days or weeks, you may even say years, to understand a river's full fishing values, and the help which a thoughtful water-bailiff can give is very considerable.

Another interesting meeting was with the head water-keeper on a big estate, where a day's fishing had been kindly given me. He was an interesting man, from whom much could be learned. He understood most matters, I should imagine, connected with trout, and he had that good Scots' accent which from boyhood has always made such an appeal to me. It was early in the year, and when he came along I already had several trout. Feeling a bit tired, I asked him to take a hand and try my rod. It is a good rod,

one of the best, but the way he handled it sent it up in value at once. True, he was standing on a high bank—it was on the Tamar—but what a line he threw, and with apparently so little effort! Clearly, he was a masterhand. Moreover, he had perfect control of the very long line he was getting out, and when a trout rose to the fly, as one soon did, it was that trout's last rise. After that he soon caught another. No, he would not keep the trout, thank you: those were for the guests who had been given a day's fishing. I was much impressed both by his courtesy and his skill, and was grateful for what really amounted to a useful lesson in fishing. For that keeper taught me, amongst other things, what shooting line was. I had a notion of it before, but he showed me what you could *really* do with it. Afterwards on the Teme my friend the Major supplemented the teaching by showing me how shooting the line is assisted by lowering the point of the rod at the right moment.

A friend of mine once had an amusing encounter with a water-bailiff. He was but a novice then. It was in the morning, and he was just about to enter the water, when a benevolent-looking gentleman suddenly appeared from nowhere, and greeted him kindly. They talked about many things, and my friend wondered who the distinguished-looking, nicely-spoken stranger might be. The newcomer said it was better to start grayling fishing, those days, at ten o'clock instead of an hour later. Thanking him heartily,

my friend waded into the water, was just about to settle down to good, hard casting, when a gentle voice from the bank said: "I suppose you have a fishing licence?"

One can imagine that some men with a turn for humour and a dislike for being "put-upon" would have said, "Yes, I've got a licence. If you're the water-bailiff you might have asked to see it when I was on the bank. If you *do* want to see it I suggest that you come in and look at it here." My friend, however, is of most placid temper, so he waded to the bank and displayed the document. But he appreciated the inwardness of the situation. Some day, perhaps, that bailiff will try the game on a less amiable individual, in which case he may have to wait awhile.

The nearest I got to being "for it" was too funny to be serious and too serious to be funny. I was by myself in a remote little village. On arrival I went to the post office, and asked for all the necessary fishing licences. One of the staff explained that they did not handle fishing licences, and referred me to a local gentleman, the representative of the squire through whose land the river ran. So I went off to the estate agent's residence, two miles away through lovely country, only to find the good man out. However, I had been informed that the permit was half a crown per week, a merely nominal charge for first-rate fishing on good water; so I left name, address, and the necessary fee, with one of the staff, and in due course the permit to fish arrived. Stupidly,

I left it at that ; and went on fishing. One evening the sea-trout were moving, and I was getting sport. Just as I had landed a sea-trout, two gentlemen came to the bank. "Nice fish this," said I. "Yes," said they. One of them seemed particularly interested. Courteous, polished, distinguished-looking, he seemed like an ambassador on holiday, staying at a country house, perhaps, and just out for a walk. No doubt the gentleman with him was his private secretary. I spoke most respectfully to them, but as the sea-trout were still showing I was in hopes of increasing the bag, I started casting again, when a chill came over the proceedings.

The distinguished-looking one said : "Would you mind showing me your licence, sir ?" (a slight variant on the usual formula).

"Certainly," said I, calmly producing the half-crown permit to fish for a week. "Here it is."

He glanced at it. A touch of the autocrat entered into his bearing as he said : "Oh, this is not enough ! This is merely a permit to fish from a gentleman's land. You ought to have a sea-trout licence ! *You have just caught a sea-trout !*"

As, only a minute ago, I had triumphantly exhibited a sea-trout in his august presence, this last statement of his was indisputable. It would be first-rate evidence in the police court. Visions of standing in the dock, answering to a charge of "in that he wilfully and maliciously . . ." floated before my mind ; and there would be nothing for it but to plead guilty.

But when you have just caught a sea-trout you are not displeased with yourself, so I added, gaily: "Yes, and it is the sixth sea-trout I've caught here!"

"Then, this is a very bad case!" said he, gravely.

"Yes, it does seem a very bad case, indeed," I agreed, proudly.

"Will you kindly give me your name and address?" he now commanded, but still with urbanity.

So I spelt him the name carefully—that would be a help when they prepared the charge sheet; and gave him the full address.

The sea-trout were still showing!

I said: "I know ignorance is no legal excuse, and, although I am a stranger to these parts and only here for a few days, yet I am obviously in the wrong. If you are empowered to sell licences, and happen to have your book on you, will you kindly sell me a licence on the spot?"

"Yes," said he, "I can sell you a licence. The cost is ten shillings for a sea-trout licence."

"I shall be happy to pay the ten shillings on the spot," said I, after the manner of Crœsus. And I placed my hand in my pocket to produce the ten shillings. There I found—twopence! I had left the pocket-book containing notes in my other coat.

Then I did what is so often a help in a crisis. I burst out laughing! He was too well schooled to join in the hilarity, indeed he looked the picture

of austerity. But I think he must have smiled, just a little, remembering the lordly way in which I had promised an immediate disbursement of ten shillings.

The sea-trout still went on showing!

I said: "Look here, as man to man, I will meet you anywhere you like in the morning and hand you the ten shillings without fail, and I am sorry indeed to give you all this trouble." It was too much to expect of frail human nature to go straight back to the hotel for the ten shillings—when sea-trout were showing!

"Right," said he. An appointment was made, and as he went away he left his blessing, "Good luck to your fishing."

And so I fished on. At the appointed hour next morning we met, and the licence was duly taken out.

I asked one water-bailiff whether he had experienced much night poaching. He said that little was attempted where he had worked. One dark night, however, he discovered some men, evidently bent on netting or otherwise poaching the trout. He got to within a short distance of one of them, who was holding a stick, and who said threateningly, "Don't you come near me!" to which the bailiff replied: "I want to have a few words with you." (It was a wonder that out of habit he did not say: "Will you kindly show me your licence?") The poacher darted off in the thick wood, and made good his escape. There are districts, however, where bailiffs have

more stirring tales to tell than this. The midnight dynamiter, for instance, is not unknown on some famous streams. There the guardians of the waters run considerable risks.

Leaving the waters, woods and fields, and the charms of their open-air life must have been a wrench to the keepers when they went off to the war, as they did in such numbers. In Selkirkshire I came across a gamekeeper who had lost one of his sons in France ; the lad was just in his early manhood, and had been an under-keeper at home. He knew all the ways of birds and fish, and had won the regard of the countryside. The father, as he went his rounds and arranged the butts for the grouse-shooting, would talk of him sadly, yet with pride. At Khartoum the sturdy Scotch gamekeeper, whom I mentioned before, wondered "what the grouse are doing at home." He used to see the *Field* regularly at home, and he sorely missed it out there. When I was able to let him have a copy, his gratitude knew no bounds. His thoughts turned ever to the purples and browns of Scotland

> So and no otherwise—so and no otherwise—hillmen desire their hills.

AT THE INN

"The social, friendly, honest man,
Whate'er he be ;
'Tis he fulfils great Nature's plan,
And none but he."

BURNS.

XII

AT THE INN

HOTEL is the fashionable word. I intend nothing derogatory by here resorting to the old term, but I think the word "inn" conveys at once something more of the warmth and the good fellowship associated with gatherings of fishermen. It used to be my business as a reporter to be present at assemblies of all sorts and conditions of men, and even now across the span of years I remember the jovial company of coursers when the card was drawn, and how the expectation of the morrow's sport put every one in good humour. Cricket and football reunions, when battles are fought over again, have their attraction. In fact, every concourse of healthy, wholesome sportsmen, whatever be their particular form of sport, commands respect. The war made soldiers of thousands and thousands of these men. They had already learned team work—it was instinctively part of them—and discipline of a sterner nature came to them as no hard lesson.

Other gatherings have their sponsors but to me most human and friendly is a little group of

fly-fishers, who, after a day in pursuit of trout or grayling, at night gather in "slippered ease" in the smoking room of the inn, fighting the day's battles over again, or prophesying good things for the morrow. In this company I am at home.

It is the business of the host and his spouse to make their guests comfortable, and for the most part they succeed. The born landlord and landlady somehow manage to convey to each man a satisfying feeling that he is a specially welcome visitor under their roof. The guest who always feels happy as he enters his favourite inn may perhaps find a personal application of the camaraderie which breathes through the lines of the old toast—

"Come in the evening, or come in the morning—
Come when you're looked for, or come without warning.
A thousand welcomes you'll find here before you,
And the oftener you come here the more we'll adore you!"

Angler-guests, in their whole-time capacity as anglers, are as a fact warmly welcome at the hotel. Often this is so for their own sakes and personalities, but I have not been able to resist a suspicion that part of their popularity is due to the fact that they are generally out all day! Once this was charmingly confirmed. One morning, after the usual large packets of sandwiches in their crinkly paper had been made up and duly appropriated, and all the anglers were supposed to have departed to the waterside and in fact by now to be busy at it, one angler, having forgotten something or other, returned to the hotel. He met

the landlady, cheery soul, who at once greeted him with : "*There ! and I thought I had packea you all off for the rest of the day !*" I grasped my forgotten packet and fled !

Blessed be meadow and stream, which give the hard-working landlady and her staff a chance to get on with the day's work !

Fishermen as a race seem to be trusted by the landlord. I remember having a delightful and successful holiday at a bungalow-hotel in Natal, which lay on a height overlooking the Mooi river. I had been fishing up to the very last minute, and was leaving in a hurry ; in fact the horses were inspanned already for the long journey. "Bill, please, landlord !" said I. "Oh," replied he, "there's no time now ; I'll post it on to you." "But," I asked, "isn't that rather risky ?" "Never been done down by a fisherman yet," answered he. Who could help sending the cheque very promptly when the bill arrived ? It made one feel that the honour of fishermen as a race was at stake.

An amusing instance of easy-going trust in fishermen occurred at a country hotel in the West of England. At luncheon or dinner, when an order for the bar was given, the guest would expect to sign the usual chit. No chit was forthcoming, though the refreshment soon was. Asked about it, the waitress said, "Oh, you pay in the bar afterwards." You were never asked definitely to pay for it, in the bar, or anywhere else. Of course everybody made—or was supposed

to make—a point of remembering and paying at the bar on the way to the smoking room. But it is possible to forget, not wilfully, but literally. The cynic, who "knows human nature," may say it was just a dodge to get customers into the bar, to spend more money. But it wasn't. There was no sort of incitement, subtle or otherwise, to such indulgence. The landlord was a prosperous man, busy, and with a large trust in his fellows. Told one day that guests must surely sometimes forget to square up with the slate (not that one existed), and thus not pay for these casual items of refreshment at meals, all he said was: "Well, in that case it does them more harm than me." One can imagine what the manager of a London cash-down stores would say! Anyhow, there it was. It was very nice, too, to get a Christmas card from that good landlord, though well over half a year since the guest's departure—time enough, one would have thought, for passing strangers to have been long forgotten.

Landlords and landladies have much scope for observing human nature. Their guests, with their comings and goings, fads and foibles, must be to them a constant series of studies in personality. One shrewd landlady in the north-west of England said she could sum up the guests at her hotel by the very way they entered. She was still not pleased with those patrons who, when the war was on, would come in and immediately ask for the porter, "at a time when," as she recalled, "every fit man was away at the war, and

AT MINE INN

we had to struggle along as best we could!" Another landlady wanted a little more time to size up humanity, and then she was confident. "Give me two days," said she, "and I can tell you all about their character, all about their 'little ways'."

Queer characters turn up at hotels sometimes. One, of whom I was told, remarked to the landlady that she must not mind him, but he happened to be a kleptomaniac. She, good soul, got it into her head that this meant not being able to sleep at night, and she expressed the hope that the fresh air would soon make him better. Two or three days afterwards the real meaning of the word flashed across her, and at the same time she remembered that a toast rack was missing. The visitor happened to be out; so she paid a visit to his bedroom. At the bottom of a drawer was the toast rack, together with a few other pieces of hotel property. These she withdrew, but otherwise kept her counsel, saying nothing to anybody, for she is not only wise, but also a great-hearted, large-souled woman. Presumably the visitor had missed the articles, for when he happened to pass the room where the silver was all laid out (for the usual cleaning) he said just one word to the landlady: "Copped!" And that was the only word that passed on the subject between him and his hosts—except when, in the ordinary way, he was leaving, and then he remarked to the landlord, as he was saying good-bye, "And tell your good wife not to worry, I've only got one spoon!"

One landlord told me they did not get many "grousers" at his fishing hotel. "If we do chance on one," he remarked, "when he wants to come again we are always full up!"

The name of the fishing inn is generally short, not so lengthy as the Australian sign, "Come in and see Wiggins!" The best name, perhaps, is that which tells you where you are, such as Tushielaw Inn, Cound Lodge Inn, Stokesay Castle Hotel, and so forth. Then there is the Swan Hotel at Tenbury, with a picture of the bird, quite at its ease, on the outside. It has sat so long that one wonders whether there will ever be any cygnets. An illustration of crossed-keys indicates the title of the Cross Keys Hotel, whilst often a family name is employed, such as the Crew and Harpur Arms Hotel at Longnor, or the Arundell Arms Hotel, Lifton. Some hotel names suggest queer adventures, the "Dog and Duck," for instance; or the "Swan and Bottle." Others may be heraldic, like the "Purple Goat." Occasionally you get a Trout Inn, an Angler's Arms, and other piscatorial titles. Cambridge men will remember the famous Pike and Eel, while Oxford is not ignorant of the Trout at Lechlade.

A shrewd business man once said he reckoned it took as much brains for a housewife to run a household well as for her husband to steer a business organization. If this is so, then the landlady of an hotel—a big house, indeed!—has to be competent. Personality, too, is necessary. One country hotel at which I stayed had twenty-five

bedrooms, all coming under the landlady's supervision ; she also saw to catering, cooking, and general management. The husband was busy all day with a big posting business, and a large poultry farm. Everything in and connected with this hotel seemed to go like clockwork. A better hotel there could not be, speaking from the guest's rather than from the expert's point of view. Both host and hostess had not only capability but also personality. And that explained it.

I have before touched on the tendency of certain people to "crab everything." Fair criticism is all right, for facts have to be faced, but some critics are apt to say *only* the unkind thing of anybody, and to neglect the many opportunities when a good word could be said honestly. Inns and hotels are specially open to this sort of belittlement. I count it a pleasure and a sporting duty to put on record the fact that, after staying several weeks at that hotel, I had never once in the town or neighbourhood heard aught expressed concerning the hostess but expressions of admiration and sincere regard. She and her husband had brought up a large family, and they had to mourn the loss of a good son in the war ; this was a sore bereavement, but they suffered it bravely, and went on with their work. Character, again ! It was quite a usual thing when one was shopping and gave the address to which the parcels were to be sent, to hear the shopkeeper remark : "Oh, you're staying at the —— You'll get well looked after there ; Mrs. —— will see to that."

The hotel charges were fair and reasonable. The ordinary guest accepts the usual tariff cheerfully. One thing, however, he does not like; that is, in addition to a fair daily charge, to be taxed one shilling extra for his bath, with indifferent arrangements. It would do inns which have such a system no harm to abolish it. In general, except perhaps for such trifling matters as pens—country inns seem to have the worst pens in the world!—my testimony after experiences of a considerable number of these inns would be cheerfully and gratefully given, that they were most clean and comfortable. And I have the happiest memories of the personal kindness of landlords and landladies, and their staffs. For home comfort, I liked especially those inns which had a little farm attached to them.

Sojourning in inns gives one ideas on the subject of chairs. It is not very common to find a chair in which you feel you can sit down, after dinner, not necessarily in luxury, but in comfortable ease. The traditional country inn chair struck me as a stiff and formal affair, not conducive to somnolence. But there was one Shropshire hotel, whose lounge really possessed CHAIRS. They were softly-embracing, sleep-compelling chairs. I might have been in one of them now, sweetly hibernating, but for a friend who set me on to committing this book.

Tea-time is a great occasion for a friendly gathering of all the guests at the inn. The jokes may be small, but they thrive under the genial influence

of the teapot. The ladies always seem to enjoy the four o'clock muster. There was a wayside inn which used to give us really delicious tea after the day's fishing in the late autumn afternoon, before we went back to the hotel. We praised it warmly one day. "Yes," said the landlady, "people often say how good it is! It's the quality of the water, though, that does it!" Honest, modest people they are, in the country.

At one fishing inn, a railway line ran between lawn and river, and this fact produced an interesting daily occurrence, which could be watched from an overlooking bedroom window. The guard threw a daily paper out from his van, and a water spaniel would regularly retrieve it, and bring it indoors. Once the paper alighted high up in a holly bush, and obstinately stuck there! It quite upset the spaniel. He worried and worried, but could not tackle the problem. After an interval of over three years, I re-visited that hotel, and hoped that the good old custom still continued. Alas! the old dog had "gone west," and the paper now came by messenger. It was a change from poetry to prose.

We had a scare at one hotel. Long faces greeted the announcement that one of the guests, a lady, had, it was feared, developed measles. The doctor had just been, and he would say, definitely, on the morrow. The hotel was full and everybody was miserable. Packing up was contemplated, time-tables were studied. A brave attempt was made to keep cheery. But measles are measles.

Then there was a dire development. Somebody said: "Harry's breaking out, too!" Harry is the good landlady's eldest son. For a big, sturdy youth, who gained his commission in a crack regiment for gallantry on the field of battle—he did look downcast. "Look at the red spots on his neck," said somebody; "why he's got it badly!" The gloom deepened sensibly. Then somebody, looking a little closer at Harry's red spots, said suddenly: "Why! he's been and spotted himself with red ink: you can see it's red ink." From the semblance of a weary old man, Harry suddenly turned into the bright, vivacious lad he is, and the proceedings terminated in a mixture of abuse and laughter. And next day the doctor was able to report that the lady guest had not got measles after all!

IN THE SMOKING ROOM

"A laugh is just like sunshine
For cheering folks along."

A Memory.

XIII

IN THE SMOKING ROOM

WHAT delightful companions has one met at this little out-of-the-way hotel, at that cosy riverside inn, to which one had gone, not knowing a soul. It is rare for an angler at a fishing inn not to make friends with others of the brotherhood who are staying there. The smoking room is a rare cementer of friendships.

Among many good fellows whom I have met in this way I often think of that excellent angler, the Major, who has figured before in these pages. The Major, by his way of doing things and by his personality, makes friends wherever he goes. It is part of his nature. In two days in a fishing village he gets to know almost every man in the place. In three days his reputation for kindness is established. In four, he is quoted as an authority: "The Major says" this, or "the Major says" that. Not that he says very much; on the contrary, he is a listener. When any one tells him anything, the speaker is made to feel he is the only man in the world.

Part of the Major's equipment when trout

fishing is a small hatchet, which he bought in New Zealand. If you are fishing and get caught up in a branch, a common misadventure, and if the Major is handy, you will suddenly hear a cheery voice singing out, "Don't you worry." He is promptly alongside with his little hatchet, and, with the persevering precision of a woodpecker, he strikes blow after blow at the offending branch until down it comes, cast and flies all saved. One evening on the Lid in Devonshire he retrieved seven flies, including a cast, for a friend. Two years before, in Somersetshire, he spent the best part of a morning cutting down obstructing branches, so that the fishing might be easier for others. He was then doing but little fishing himself as he was recovering from an operation. We spent about two months together in various parts of England and Scotland, and much hearty laughter do I owe to him.

The Major's humorous experiences and stories are well worth hearing. One, I remember, related to the town crier of a little Welsh town, who had given out, in Welsh, that some farmer had lost six sheep. He then proceeded to interpret it into English. It ran something like this (would that the type could reproduce tone and accent !) : "This is to give notice that Farmer ——— has lost six sheeps ; not the sheeps that sails on the seas, look you ! but the sheeps that you see feeding on the grasses ! "

The Major never seemed to monopolize the company ; rather, the company monopolized him.

Somebody or other would ask him if, when he missed a big trout, he addressed the surrounding air in fluent Welsh. "Ah, that is not amongst my accomplishments," he would reply, "unless I am hard put to it. . . . By the way, did you ever hear about the two Welsh colliers coming back from work? When crossing a bridge they saw two men fighting below. One of the colliers, pointing to the two men, said: 'And who is that down by there I shouldn't wonder?' And his mate replied: 'Well, indeed, I do not know, so they do tell me!'" The Major was encored for this, and he proceeded: "Then there is the tale of a Welsh mate in a windjammer, having some trouble with a young hand. The mate said to the lad: 'Come here, Di Jones, come here, you little rascal; I was tell you six or five times once before that your face was like a mice, and if I run you I will overtake you till I catch you, and I will smack your back before your face.'"

One evening, at an hotel largely filled with grayling fishermen, I fell in with rather a character. He had just come back from military service abroad, and was soon off to India on some Government work. Saying he was anxious to send his son to a good public school at home, he asked if anybody could tell him of a really good school. Everybody seemed interested in the intellectual quest. A learned man said that at one school, in addition to a sound all-round education, the classics received special attention. "No, I don't want the classics," said he. Other

schools, some of the best in the land, were mentioned, one by one. None seemed to satisfy. The father's anxiety appeared great. All were only too desirous to help in a case so deserving of the loftiest advice. A stage further was advanced. The father announced that what he really wanted was a school where they gave the boys beer and plenty of Rugby football. Beer there must be, he insisted. This rather puzzled the intellectuals. It was an item which they had not seriously considered. They could all tell him of schools where Rugby football was played indeed, but of a school where home-brewed beer was dispensed, as part of the curriculum, they could not be sure. The father stuck to his point. "Let the lad have a little beer at school with plenty of Rugby football, and then he will have to look after himself," he said. Somebody inquired: "And how old is your son now, sir?" The reply was unexpected: "At present the lad is two years old." The company decided that the matter was not pressing.

Generally, when March browns, red palmers and all the rest of it have had their due in the way of conversation in the smoking room after dinner, somebody branches off into humorous reminiscences. A good many have stayed in my memory.

One concerned a revival meeting. A man down at heel, but possessed of extraordinary inner fervour, kept saying in a loud voice: "Amen. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!" A lady next to

him whispered gently that she could well understand his being touched by such beautiful prayers, but could he, please, try and keep silence? If so, she would present him with a new pair of boots. The man responded: "Thank you, mum, I will try; I will indeed!" He strove valiantly. You could imagine him holding himself back, straining at the leash like a greyhound. At last something was said which touched the man's heart particularly. It was too much. Arms uplifted, up he jumped triumphantly, exclaiming with a voice that penetrated through the whole building: "*Boots or no boots*—Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!"

Another story belongs to war time at Charing Cross underground station: a lad was to be seen who was somewhat vague as to his surroundings; he had celebrated at least one birthday too many. A sympathetic passer-by in mufti spoke to him and inquired where his camp lay. The lad managed to tell him, and the man went off to ascertain the platform and the time of the train. He then hurried back to the khaki lad, who still looked very helpless. "Come along, my lad," said he cheerily, "we have to go to No. —— platform, the train will soon be in!" At the bottom of the stairs the friend in need met a porter, to whom he briefly explained matters. The porter, good fellow, understood, and said: "Leave him to me, sir, I'll see him in the train all right; why, here's his very train just coming in, and it will put him down just by his camp! Come along, my lad,

with me!" said he. The man who had safely steered the lad along was touched by the railwayman's human kindness, and just as the lad was being put into the train, he said, "Thank you very much, indeed!" Whereupon the patient turned round, and with an old-world courtesy, said to his original rescuer: "Ye're verra welcome!"

Fishing lends itself peculiarly to the kindly grace of humour. There is a special type of angling joke. The "Come inside!" of *Punch* is, of course, a classic—a classic with honour in its own country, moreover. As a guest at the Fly Fishers' Club in Piccadilly the other day, when looking round those wonderful walls, I caught sight of the old familiar illustration and text, duly framed. There is a pleasant anecdote (its printed source unknown to me) of an angler, engaged with his third bottle of beer, remarking, "There is this to be said about fishing: it *does* keep a man out of the public-houses." In the Transvaal two men were bottom-fishing for yellow fish. One said he liked his friend's float, with its vermilion tip. It looked cheerful in the landscape. His friend replied: "It looks much more cheerful when you cannot see it at all!" Once, when I was fly-fishing in South Africa in company with a Natal policeman, it came on to rain hard and we were both nearly drenched. "Anyhow," I said, "it will do good for the farmers!" "Yes, but I'm not a farmer!" quoth he. The humorist who takes to rod and line generally gets going. I remember one, on being told to throw in some

ground bait, inquiring whether a few old menu-cards would do. He was later informed he was fishing too deep. "No," said he, "it's the fish that are too deep!"

At the fishing hotel, especially when the evenings are soon dark, as in early spring or in autumn, a move may be made from the smoking-room to the drawing-room for some music, "sometimes part-singing, part not," as a professional humorist once declared. When, as sometimes happens, one of the guests has a good voice and knows how to use it, he finds a very appreciative audience in the anglers together assembled, especially if any of them have their families with them too. Good melodious music is somehow very grateful after one has spent a day in the open air. It is not, of course, always easy to get the musical evening properly going. George Grossmith, the elder, summed up the difficulties. "Those who can sing," he said, "won't sing. While those who can't sing will!" But at the inn the trouble is chiefly with those who can and won't. The hotel piano is sometimes both good and regularly tuned, and then it is a joy. Often, alas! it needs the dentist! But the saddest experience I ever had was in the Sudan. I was told there was a piano at a club, and thither I hastened as soon as I was off duty, anxious to get my hands on the keys. Something was amiss, however. The piano was quite dumb. I learnt that the wires had been taken out to make traces for fishing!

THE CHANCE ENCOUNTER

"Chance serves you everywhere; keep your hook always in the water. There will be a fish in the eddy where you least expect it."

OVID.

XIV

THE CHANCE ENCOUNTER

WHETHER one is fishing or not, when in a part of country hitherto unvisited, one is sure to come across matters of interest. The local colour of new places is so vivid to the stranger that he finds it hard to realize that dullness is to be found there as elsewhere. To him the everyday life of the people is attractive, there is history to be related of town or village, and glorious open-air country is at hand. Perhaps most fascinating is the prospect of a happy chance meeting. The man to whom human nature appeals is always having chance meetings, which may ripen into lifelong friendships.

I shall ever be grateful to the chance meeting which gave me the acquaintance of the Major who figures so prominently in these pages. We came across each other casually at Dulverton, exchanged a few words two or three times, and met just once on the river bank. I was greatly interested in his enormous album containing photographs, which he himself had taken : it was obvious he had been in many parts of the world. Rivers at

home, on the continent, many pictures of New Zealand waters and incidents, scenes in the South Sea Islands—it was the record of a mighty traveller. Though I had seen comparatively little of him the Major and his travels stayed in my memory.

Then, after the war, we met unexpectedly again at a little hotel in Devonshire. I bless the day. The memory of those two or three little chats at Dulverton two years previously seemed to have made us old friends—that is one of the charms of angling, if you please—and all through the season we fished much together, for chance brought us together on other occasions.

So long as he is by a river the Major is happy. Now and again he would not fish, but would come with me, and watch, and if he could put his little New Zealand hatchet to good use he was indeed a boy at school. Be it said, though, that he never used it to do damage, only to repair disaster. When he came as spectator, his companionship was quite an education. It was never superior, patronizing knowledge he threw at one. Patronage is not pleasant ; indeed it is insufferable. But good-humoured chaff, such as he gave me, was both interesting and useful. I would throw over a rising fish, and when it rose to my fly I would strike—maybe a fraction of a second too late. The Major would remark : "Promising style, just a trifle too late ; exactly three minutes, twenty seconds too late. I timed you by my watch !" I gave him plenty of occasion for such

THE MAJOR OF THIS BOOK

comment, I fear. But once, happily when he was watching me, I made a really good cast over a rising trout, just under an overhanging bough. The fish rose, was hooked, and played to the net, which he handled for me himself. Altogether not a discreditable performance, which caused him (in a weak moment !) to exclaim, "I must say you did that very well !" His words of approval echo pleasantly in my ear to this day. A parson, a brother of the angle, once said to me, at a little riverside inn in Scotland, "It is the little things in life that are so important." That Lancashire vicar had keen insight into human affairs. We are apt to get touchy when the wrong thing is said, huffed when our sense of importance is (as we think) assailed ; our nerves are likely to be ruffled when somebody or other seems all out of sympathy with our (of course correct) attitude. Contrariwise, we cherish—there is a lot of human nature in man, to quote the old saying—the golden word, said at the right moment. I think the charm, the value, of the Major's companionship was that he never laughed at, but always with one. The Major would describe himself as "a hard case." Yet he took me across the street one day on seeing a poor cripple whom he had got to know. "Come along," he said, "we must go and have a talk to that old man ; he likes any one to have a word with him." Then there was the day on which we were due to fish on one of the choicest trout waters in England. He received word that an old friend of his was

seriously ill. We were two hundred and fifty miles away from London at the time, but ignoring both fishing and distance, the Major went off by the next train to see his old friend. These things were typical of the man; and it would be typical of him, if he knew what I was saying about him, to ejaculate, "You blithering idiot! Cut it out!"

One never knew, in the course of a long holiday, what interesting personality one would meet, either when fishing or when seeing the country. Calling one day at a hotel on the Welsh border, I found that the host was formerly a member of the Metropolitan police force; testimonials and addresses on the walls showed good work done. At another hotel, in the neighbourhood of which the rivers Lugg and Arrow meet, I was struck by the musical speaking voice of the landlord. I later remarked on this to a friend, who told me that mine host used to be a member of Lincoln's Inn choir, that he afterwards joined the Temple choir; and that he had sung at the coronations of King Edward and King George.

Another landlord, of an inn in a Shropshire town, was one of the best fishermen in the town and district, and he was also the possessor of quite a valuable collection of antiques. He loved his collection, and though he had been offered two thousand pounds for the contents of one room, he could not part with the things. They "belonged" to him. In collecting them, year after year, in arranging them, and tending them—as

a devoted gardener tends his plants—he had made them part of himself. Each time I went to that delightful town I visited his spotless little inn to enjoy the atmosphere of the past which the landlord's talk as much as his collection reconstructed so vividly. One day while we were chatting he suddenly noticed a figure in another room. "Ah, gentlemen, come along into this room," said he, "here is a living piece worth all these relics put together!" We went into the other room, and the landlord said: "Now look at this dear old lady!" Truth to tell she was a goodly sight. Her age was great, her face "wrinkled, but still rosy." The landlord continued: "She is actually ninety-three years old. She lives by herself, walks into Ludlow by herself, does her own needlework, her own reading and writing, all without glasses, and she has a cottage as clean as any palace; and now, granny," he said, turning to her, but evidently forgetting her deafness, "will you kindly tell these gentlemen how as a girl you remember seeing Queen Victoria when she came to Ludlow!" Granny looked up at him, and replied, very sweetly: "I'll have a glass of port wine, if you please."

Sometimes at an hotel, when you are just doing up your tackle, ready for a long day, a stranger who is preparing to go out and do the day's work for which he has specially come into the district, looks longingly at the rod and basket, and is evidently with you in spirit. I always

think it a good omen if some one in this way wishes me "Good luck!" or "Tight lines!" or "Hope you'll have sport!" And it often happens, for angling is productive of much good-will and fellowship. One morning, just as I was starting out in waders, a stranger remarked, cordially: "Wish I were coming with you!" Obviously, he was a fisherman. I found later that this was the case. Formerly a distinguished barrister, he was now a County Court judge, and he was there on his circuit. It was a human touch, "Wish I were coming with you!"

I remember a similar expression of quick sympathy of much older date. It was in the old reporting days in Johannesburg, when I was "diarized," as the phrase is, to report a sermon by one of the Church of England mission which came to South Africa in 1904. It was a sermon worth listening to, and worthy of the space the Press gave to it. In the vestry I had to see the preacher afterwards. He remarked on the variety of a reporter's life, and I confessed that I had not expected to be doing a sermon. I had, in fact, hoped to be at the big boxing encounter that night at the Wanderers. "I should very much have liked to be there myself," said he. Afterwards, I learned that he had been a great boxer at Oxford! If his attainments in that direction were as powerful as his preaching, he was a host to reckon with.

What angler does not retain happy memories of "the friendly lift" which is the result of a

chance encounter? Last October three of us, walking to our fishing ground, were overtaken by a horse and carriage. A genial "Jump in, gentlemen!" greeted us. We jumped in. We chatted gaily, and the distinguished-looking man who had put his carriage at our disposal made us thoroughly at our ease. He put us down near our fishing beat. It appeared that this was one of the big landowners of the district. "Thank you, squire, from three strangers in the land!" Some people, travelling life's round, seem rarely to run across old friends in unexpected places or to renew old acquaintances just by accident. But the world is a small parish after all, and to others of us chance meetings seem to be a matter of course. We are always knocking-up unexpectedly against somebody whom we have met before or who has come from, or been in, similar parts. I have come across Shropshire folk all over South Africa, even on the borders of Swaziland. A Scotsman of my acquaintance—now a leading architect in South Africa—was going over a mine on the Rand with a party of friends. Underground he came across a miner whom he felt sure he had met somewhere before. A few questions confirmed it. In the miner the architect had recognized an old acquaintance from his own village in Fifeshire, though he had no idea that he had come to South Africa. He remembered, too, that the miner used to have a beautiful tenor voice, and that one of his favourite solos was "If with all our hearts" from

"Elijah." He asked his old acquaintance if he would sing it to them, which he did there and then. I wonder how many people have heard that glorious aria ringing out in the bowels of the earth!

WHEN LADIES FISH

"Woman, once made equal to man, becomes his superior."

SOCRATES.

"For a generous rival, commend me to a woman."

DR. HENRY VAN DYKE, in "Little Rivers."

XV

WHEN LADIES FISH

IN my wanderings I have come across a good many ladies who are skilled in fishing, and from the pages of the sporting papers I deduce that women are taking to the sport in ever-increasing numbers, while their success with both trout and salmon is proportionate to their zeal. Indeed some of the most important entries on the "big fish list" have ladies' names against them. South Africa has had its lady anglers. Miss Rhodes, sister of Mr. Cecil Rhodes, fished regularly from a little boat in Kalk Bay, near Capetown. Lady Farrar used to fish with her husband in Durban harbour, and they used to take me with them sometimes. I well remember her getting into a big one once. As it was evidently a monster I carefully timed the play. After fifty-five minutes, however, the fish got off. It was probably a skate. These brutes sometimes take well over an hour to bring to boat. I thought the angler's wrist would have given out, but she held on, enjoyed every minute of it, and, when the fish got off, behaved like a true sportsman.

Prominent among lady anglers is Mrs. R. B. Marston, which is very fitting considering her husband's position in the fishing world. Indeed he says she is the keenest fisher he has ever met—and he must have met quite a few! Mrs. Marston delights in dry-fly fishing, watching for rises in the approved manner and observing what Mrs. Battle called "the rigour of the game." "The weather does not matter to her, and the difficulty is to get her away from the water when she is out with rod and line." Her daughters are anglers too.

Some women throw a very pretty fly. I watched a lady fishing on Torquay reservoir last year, and admired the way in which she handled a three-quarter pound trout. I admired also the ease with which she cast. She did it equally well, it seemed to me, with either hand. Ambi-dexterity in fishing is not only admirable, but also of physical benefit; obviously, the muscles get relief.

Once when wet-fly fishing in Natal I essayed seriously to throw with the left hand. Being naturally right-handed, I found my left awkward, but I got along pretty well and made fair practice. But the thing was spoilt by the periodical conviction that at certain spots I was sure to get a good rise—and then almost unconsciously back went the rod to the right hand! In England, last year, I sometimes threw with the left hand, but I found myself afflicted with the same tendency to trust only the right hand in times of need. As a

fact never have I risen a trout when casting with the left hand. I recognize clearly that it is advantageous to be able to throw with either hand, and the lady of the reservoir—I never knew her name—showed me how it could be done.

Fishing has somehow always been associated with singing in my mind, and it struck me that it would be interesting to find out whether any of the leading lady singers were also attracted by a sport which is beloved by Mr. Plunket Greene and other famous male artists of song. Therefore, I asked Mrs. Francis Muecke (Madame Ada Crossley) whether she had ever been an angler. "Yes," said this fine artist and very charming Australian lady—"I used to go deep-sea fishing as a girl in Gippsland; we used to ride to the Ninety Mile Beach, about sixteen miles away from my old home—of course every Australian rides! We always had wonderful sport, and we girls just loved the riding, the deep-sea fishing, and the fun of it all!" At the same time, I asked her husband, Mr. Francis Muecke, also an Australian, whether he had ever plied rod and line, and he spoke with glee of an occasion on which he went trout-fishing—on a river near King's Lynn—and caught two trout, "and, what is more," said the genial surgeon, "they were sizeable, by which I mean eatable!" I hope my good friends, Mr. and Mrs. Muecke, will take up fishing on their next Scottish holiday.

The musical profession no doubt numbers a good many other lady anglers. That great

contralto, Dame Clara Butt, for instance, is very fond of fishing, a taste which she shares with her husband, Mr. Kennerley Rumford. She had great fortune the first time she tried, in Norway, whither she and her husband went for their honeymoon. In the first quarter of an hour she hooked a salmon, kept her head, played it and had the satisfaction of landing it in forty minutes, twenty-eight pounds, and "a very fine first effort" as her husband observed with just pride. Mr. and Mrs. Kennerley Rumford do not, I fear, get so much fishing as they would like, so heavy are the demands made upon their time by the concert platform. But the keenness is there. And their two sons love fishing also, as a part of an enthusiasm for sport generally.

Miss Carmen Hill, daintiest of mezzo-sopranos, sent a charming reply to my inquiries. "When first I began fishing I think I had the usual beginner's luck and caught a few trout, but I think I loved the peace and rest which the whole day in the open air gives one rather than the actual fishing. My *finest* catch was at Dubhgharadh in Isle of Arran, where I spent a week about two years ago, and there I caught a lovely trout, weighing nearly three pounds (two pounds fourteen ounces, to be exact), and several others from a half-pound to three-quarters of a pound, but I am afraid it is much more luck with me than good management! I couldn't tell you now what flies I used!"

It was very pleasant in various places to find

husbands and wives in sympathy on fishing holidays. In Devonshire in the spring of 1919 one married couple used to go off together every day. On reaching the water they would go their several ways, meeting to compare notes at lunch-time or in the evening. This had long been their invariable custom. The lady, of course, depended on herself for landing fish and everything. Devonshire streams are well suited to ladies who fish by themselves. The trout there run small and do not take so much landing or unhooking as the pounders or two-pounders of chalk-stream districts, though it would be hard to find fault with their sporting qualities.

The husband of a wife who fishes ought, I think, to be a pretty good hand at it himself. I knew of one sad case in which a man was always urging his wife to fish. At last she took his advice, and applied herself to the art seriously. She happened to be a very clever woman and in course of time she not only equalled her adviser in skill but surpassed him in basket. The last state of that man was that he gave up fishing and was to be seen meekly accompanying his wife as she fished. She allowed him to carry her landing net!

In Scotland I met a honeymoon couple who had angling gear with them. He was an experienced fisherman, she a novice. They were a happy couple, but fishing was too much for them, and once they had begun they got so interested and absorbed that they were very soon out of sight

of each other. The newly married might do worse than follow their example, for such partings mean all the more happy meetings. I don't think she caught anything, but she got rises from trout, here and there, and she was very ambitious to land one some day. This couple had come from England to Scotland by motor-bicycle, and the side-car enabled them to get from the hotel to the best fishing grounds conveniently and quickly.

Great is the pride of the sportsman who sees his son bring down his first pheasant, or bowl over his first rabbit. I think it must be so equally with the fond father whose daughter gets her first fish. One father not long ago related in *The Field* the achievement of his daughter, a young lady of nineteen, who hooked a salmon on the Don and played it unaided for five hours and forty minutes! It was a fish of twenty-six pounds.

A friend of mine in Birmingham sent me an interesting account of his young daughter's first trout, a three-quarter-pounder caught on the first day she had a rod all her own. "With regard to my daughter catching the three-quarter pound trout: I had taught her to fish a few times when I had been going for chub from a boat on the Avon, but she had not had a rod of her own until the day she caught this particular fish. We had been fishing on a July afternoon on the Warwickshire Blyth, each independently, and at 4.30 I called her to come to tea at a cottage. On the way there was a fair hole in the stream, and I

asked her to cast a fly on it ; I wanted to see how she was progressing. The fly was an olive, fished dry. Her first two casts were good, and the fly floated down nicely, with its wings cocked. I said, 'Well done,' and at the next cast, after the fly had floated about two feet, up came a trout, which she hooked. Seeing that the fish was going for the roots of a tree, I took the rod and held the trout till I had reeled in the line taut. I then handed back the rod to my daughter, and, after the trout had jumped out of the water twice, I got the landing net under him, and his tale was told."

A London fishing-tackle manufacturer told me the other day of what happened with a fly-rod bought from his establishment by a father for his little daughter. She had seen men fly-fishing on her father's stream, and she herself became keen on learning to throw the fly. The kind father therefore bought her a new fly-rod, to be all her very own, also the necessary reel, line, cast, flies, basket, and landing net. Next morning he had to go away, but he put the rod and line together, and completely equipped the little angler for her first attempt at fly-fishing that morning. When he returned home in the afternoon he was greeted by his beaming daughter with : "Oh, daddy ! I caught a trout with that rod you gave me ! It gave me such sport, and it just sent me hot and cold, all over, until it was landed ! It was simply splendid, daddy, and do come and look at the trout ! " One can imagine the whole-

some look, the clear complexion, the bright eyes of a little girl revelling in the open air, catching her first trout.

It is a picture I prefer to that of the girl who was lunching with two other ladies at a table near mine in a London restaurant. Between two courses she produced a bag, from which she suddenly extracted a small looking-glass. The result of careful inspection was the adjustment of a few wisps of hair. Afterwards out of the bag came a powder puff, which was duly and artistically employed. I rather enjoyed the observation of one of the other ladies who had been watching all this. "I say, Gertie, haven't you brought your tooth-brush?"

Another instance of fisherwoman's luck occurs to me. It was on the Mooi river in Natal. The family came down to the river where I was fishing, and my host and his two daughters threw a fly for the first time. Fishing had not much appealed to them, although they delighted to see their guests having sport and being happy. But this time they had a try. Before long my host got a small trout, and then came an excited call, "Oh! I've got one!" from one of the daughters. With a light fly-rod and a Hardy's favourite the fair angler had hooked what was obviously a good trout. She made an appeal for the rod to be taken over, but this was firmly vetoed. It is a sound principle for each angler to catch his or her own first fish, unless, as in the case mentioned before, it is making for tree-roots, when a little

assistance is permissible. But here was a clear field, and no need for favour. "I'm sure the rod will break!" said she. "Never mind if it does!" "Oh, but I shall lose the fish!" she exclaimed, only to be told that "those who hook a trout must catch it or lose it."

So the lady, proving an apt pupil, kept her head and a tight line, with the rod well up, letting the trout have a run when he insisted on it, and reeling-in when possible. At last, after many hopes and fears, the net was slipped under a fish which, when weighed at the farmstead, amidst the congratulations of the family to the successful fisherwoman, turned the scales at one pound three ounces.

Perhaps I cannot close this chapter better than by showing that ladies are able not only to catch trout but also to write charmingly about the sport. I venture to quote the following extract from an article entitled "A Day on the Stour," which appeared in the *Fishing Gazette*. It is proof positive.

"The hours passed, the shadows lengthened; sheep gathered round me as if attracted by some family likeness, which rudeness on their part I was far too dejected to resent. At last I knew it was time to return to the inn. I was beaten, defeated. The glorious opportunity of being the first woman who had ever caught a fish on these waters was for ever gone. One more attempt I would make over the shiny green stuff by the bank, and then I must go. Whir-r-r! away rushed my line, round and round flew my reel. I nearly fell into the water at the suddenness of the occurrence, but, as yards of my line disappeared rapidly, so did my

despondency. I was all alertness and keenly alive to the necessity of calm behaviour and cool action. Oh ! the excitement of such a moment ! The fears, the hopes, the thousand tremors that make each moment appear an age ! Would my slender rod bear the strain ? Would the fish reach the rapids beyond, or perhaps dive under the bridge and break my line ? What if, after all, I should lose it ! It is so difficult in such cases to convince your absent friends of the great size of the lost fish. Oh ! joy ! The trout at last shows signs of exhaustion. Now is the time to be cautious. At last I could sing victory ! For the glorious creature was lying on the grass at my feet, while I stood gazing with rapture on the very best fish ever taken from the Stour with a fly. I make this statement in the full assurance that there is not a single member of the association who will venture to contradict me."

BLANKS AND TROUBLES

"Give me a supple fly-rod, equip me in all respects in light marching order, introduce me to a few miles of stream that meanders through flowery mead and leafy dell ; that now rolls dark and deep and anon splashes and foams over stones and shallows ; that at every bend opens up a new prospect ; that brings me here to a rustic, weather-browned footbridge, and there to a ford through which the ploughman or harvestman takes his team ; or to a simple hamlet, perfumed with wood fire, thatch and homeliness, where morning newspapers are unknown ; thence into the sheltered glade, and, by smiling homestead, away from the haunts of man ; give me all this on a day when the larks sing loud and untiringly, and the insects rehearse in happy chorus ; when 'waves of shadow' pass over the glad fields and woods, and all God's beautiful earth seems to murmur in grateful softness of spirit—give me this and you present to me one of the masterful attractions of what has been so appropriately termed the 'contemplative man's recreation.' I shall like it all the better, to be sure, if my fly be not cast upon the water in vain ; but in no case shall I bewail the day as a positive blank."

William Senior (Red Spinner), "Waterside Sketches."

XVI

BLANKS AND TROUBLES

AFTER reading such persuasive words as those which are quoted from "Red Spinner's" "Waterside Sketches," none of us should complain overmuch even if we have caught no fish to-day. "Red Spinner" says all that can be said concerning a day in the country when the tally of fish caught stands at nil, but when the surroundings have been beautiful and the spirit has been refreshed and strengthened. But there are blanks and blanks. Those discussed in the following pages are mostly of the second kind!

I think that one of the worst blank days is one not caused by your fishing merits or demerits, but by such a malign chance as causes you, when you have gone miles to fish and are safely arrived, to find that you have left your reel behind you. It adds to the blankness if the car which brought you has departed and is already out of sight before you discover the fatal fact. One worthy angler at a Devonshire hotel had a tremendous tramp back to get his forgotten reel and it took a large piece out of the day's fishing.

The Major, too, had a sad experience. He and I had a permit for a day on a strictly preserved water, and the old pony in the jingle landed us, supremely happy, in the forenoon at a spot about seven miles from home. We were just about to put our tackle together, when the Major exclaimed: "There! I've left my fishing bag, with my reel, casts, and all my flies, behind at the hotel, or dropped it on the road." We came to the conclusion it could not possibly have dropped out of the jingle. The Major rose to great heights. He was philosophical and would not hear of my going back. "You go on with the fishing, old chap, and I'll be back in the afternoon." So off he drove, and I, feeling heavy-hearted and somewhat selfish, went on fishing. But the trout were rising, and I fear I did not let my uneasy conscience prevent me from taking advantage of the fact. Three or four hours later he returned with his fishing bag, and he had rare sport after all; indeed, by 7 p.m., when we started for home, he had nearly caught me up. The old pony that day had done nearly thirty miles. If there are such things as stable prayers a petition surely went up that night, ". . . and please do not let these fly-fishermen be so careless again, for my feet still 'vex me'" (as they say in Wales).

Another angler told me that once when he got to the waterside he discovered he had left his reel behind him, and was correspondingly depressed. However, he betook him to the water-bailiff's

cottage hard by, thinking he might perhaps have the good fortune to borrow one, else would his day's fishing be lost. The water-bailiff was in. "Oh, yes," said he, "I can lend you a reel, and a line on it, with pleasure; in fact, I always keep a spare one by me for you gentlemen who leave your own behind. It's surprising the number who come to borrow it, and" (he added diplomatically) "they always return it to me."

Various devices are employed to ensure not forgetting things. I wish it were possible, in buying a reel, to make a point with the tackle-merchant that the article purchased shall be one that will never leave itself behind. I like to put my reel into my fishing bag, and to keep it there when not in use. Then it is always there. The danger, of course, is when you are cleaning and oiling it overnight, or if you have run off line to dry. In either case, when the job is done, the wise procedure is to put the reel back at once into the fishing bag, which one should habitually have handy. To extract the reel from the bag in the hall, and to leave the bag there, while the reel is placed on the mantelpiece in the smoking-room, perhaps some distance away, is fatal. Some fishermen, before starting out in the morning, catechise themselves thus:

Have I my . . Rod?
Have I my . . Reel and line?
Have I my . . Cast box, with cast or casts, and damping pads?
Have I my . . Fly case and flies?

Have I my . . Odourless paraffin and line greaser ?
Have I my . . Fishing bag ?
Have I my . . Landing net ?
Have I my . . Waders ?
Have I my . . Wading socks ?
Have I my . . Brogues ?
Have I my . . Sandwiches ?
Have I my . . Refreshment ?

Once, when I was fishing the Onny in Shropshire, I had, not a blank day, but a day which looked like having a blank in it. I had forgotten my luncheon ; and I did not realize it until I was miles away from the hotel. The sandwiches I knew had been carefully put ready for me, but, in the rush of starting and with the car waiting to take me to the waterside, I had omitted to pick them up. After a hard morning's fishing in air which acts like a tonic, the ministry of the interior reminds one if luncheon has been missed. It was about 2 o'clock. I might, perhaps, have lit a fire and done a trout to a turn—for some nice trout had been caught—but trout by itself lacks something. I set off to explore the resources of the country.

Coming at last to a cottage by the roadside I approached it. By the garden gate was a little maid of about fourteen, hard at work, her face "like morning roses newly washed with dew." Would she, I entreated, please go and ask mother if she could kindly supply a passing fisherman with a little bread and butter and a cup of tea, as he had forgotten to bring his luncheon ? Off

went the little lass to the cottage, returning soon with a white-clothed tray, on which were dainty biscuits and a steaming cup of tea. All soon disappeared. The little caterer evidently observed that there was a rustic appetite to be appeased, for she said : "If you will come up into the cottage, sir, I will lay the cloth for you, and you can have a proper meal." "But," I said, "will it be convenient for your mother?" "My mother's dead, sir," was the simple reply.

I went. The dear little girl soon had the cloth laid, and a simple but an appetizing meal on the table. It was a time when the rationing difficulty was not yet solved, and I said : "But what about your father?" "Oh," replied she, "he's at work in the fields, and I've plenty of food for him." She was ready at every turn, this good, capable, little hostess.

I asked her if she ought not to be careful before letting strangers come into the cottage. "Oh," answered she, cutting more bread and butter, "I feel quite safe ; besides there's a gun in the next room!"

So, thus entertained, I made up for the missing luncheon and, on leaving, handed over a few shillings as a return. I asked her if her father would like a grayling, for I had one of about three-quarters of a pound, in beautiful condition, in the bag. "Oh, yes, thank you, sir," was her quick, grateful reply.

Good little housewife! I used to think no little hostesses in the world could compare with

the colonial girls in South Africa, who, if father and mother happened to be out, would take charge, and make friends feel at home. Their youthful self-possession, tact, and hospitality was a real live welcome. But after this Shropshire display—I rejoice that it happened in my own native county—I am pleased to be able to report that the Old Country is still holding its own.

Most of us have fished on association or hotel water where "the feesh . . . is not so numerous as the feeshermen, but more wise." I remember one morning casting the fly on the Coln at Fairford (where the trout are numerous *and* wise), just by a bridge. Looking up, I perceived a bystander, with a humorous eye. "Those trout have the names and addresses of all you gentlemen," he said. An old joke, but it seemed fitting and fresh. Certainly, those trout made one think about blanks. Did one put the fly over them ever so temptingly, they would have none of it. Concerning chaff from bridges, the fisherman gets plenty of it. But once, at any rate, the biter was bit. A youthful fisherman planned revenge, and he won his victory oddly. Rigging up rod and line, he made the motions of fishing in an impossible ditch off the main stream. The inevitable "Caught any?" soon came from the bridge, and he replied, "Yes." "How many?" continued the questioner, to receive the grave response, "Well, you're the fifteenth!"

To revert to the Coln, which is dry-fly water, anglers who have fished at Fairford will remember

the stone wall which runs alongside the opposite side of the association water, not far from the hotel. The other day a brother angler mentioned an interesting fact about this spot. At the lower end of the stone wall, under the first bush, there was a continuous rise of trout, but none ever seemed to be taken there, on account of an eddy or undercurrent which was visible only through strong glasses. It seemed to interfere fatally with the whole career of the dry fly. Just above and below this eddy, however, trout were caught all right.

On a blank day, say when the water is out of order, the angler can at any rate console himself by seeing something of the country, especially if he is in a district which is new to him. It is not fishing, but it "fits in," and of course there may be other compensations. Devonshire primroses in the spring, for instance, are a feast for the eye. From the train, even, in April you may rejoice in the masses of blooms which cover every embankment.

> "Long as there's a sun that sets,
> Primroses will have their glory."

Once an Englishman came across wild primroses in a Canadian wood; looking long at them, he remarked: "Now I know why I love England!"

In summer, the hayfields—except for those who have hay-fever—are a delight. In August there are the golden cornfields picked out with

scarlet poppies, or the "stubbles dotted o'er with sheaves." In autumn, of course, nature's hues are so wonderful that a day stolen from fishing for a country walk is not regretted. The pursuit of grayling on the morrow will be all the more enjoyed. It is noticeable how often one's wanderings on these "off days" bring one to the old grey church which is so essential a feature of rural England. Mellowed by time, with the atmosphere of centuries of prayer and praise about its ancient stones, the old village church is a refreshment to mind and soul. Izaak Walton must have spent many hours in and about the precincts.

When fishing one must obviously take the luck of the game as it comes. The more cheerfully this is recognized, the more is the enjoyment. Laughter is a good cure for misfortune, if you can apply it. It calls for some measure of philosophy, but the thing is possible. I remember one excellent fisherman, a parson, who told me of an unfortunate day in Natal when he lost fish after fish, an unusual thing for him, but at last got hold of a big one which was well hooked and felt like a certainty. And then the gut, frayed perhaps by earlier contests, parted and the fish was gone. "It had been such a run of disasters," said he, "all the afternoon, and this was the climax. I just burst out laughing."

Sometimes the trout rise freely but with singular consistency every fish may be missed or only just pricked. Possibly one fails to strike at

the right moment, possibly the trout come short, possibly something is wrong with the hook. Whatever the reason, nothing goes right. The only comfort I ever had on such an occasion was when a Devonshire lad at Lifton sagely observed to me: "Them as you miss don't count, sir." That was at any rate a new point of view.

One of the worst experiences of this sort I ever had was on the old Tern which I was fishing once more after several years abroad. I missed every trout that rose to my fly, and the rises were many. I imagined that they were coming short and thought out other convincing excuses. But, when in despair I handed over the rod to my brother, he succeeded in hooking nearly every fish that rose and made a handsome bag. So my excuses lost much of their plausibility. A day or two later, I remember, on a lower reach of the same river I happily redeemed my credit, getting almost every trout that came at me fairly. And one of them was a beauty of 3¾ lbs., which took that excellent fly for big trout, the Sarcelle.

TROUT FISHING IN SOUTH AFRICA

"It must be a delightful experience for one who has memories of trout fishing in the Old Country to land a trout in the country of his adoption."

Mr. R. B. Marston, in the *Fishing Gazette*.

XVII

TROUT FISHING IN SOUTH AFRICA

HAPPILY, trout fishing is not confined to the United Kingdom. It is to be had in America, Australasia, Africa, India and Ceylon, to say nothing of the various countries of Europe. In New Zealand, trout acclimatization began in 1868; in South Africa (in the Cape and Natal) in the early eighties. In neither Dominion nor Union were trout indigenous, but they have done well in both countries. Colonial Governors under the British flag have at all times shown their sympathy with trout acclimatization. The Briton is a sportsman wherever he goes, and it has been recognized that trout fishing not only adds to a country's sporting attractiveness but is an economic asset of some importance.

In South Africa, generally speaking, brown trout, Loch Levens, and rainbows all flourish. Cape Province possesses many trout rivers, and here the fly-fisherman can be thoroughly at home. The Hex River, with its picturesque scenery, is one of the finest trout streams and one of the

most popular. The late Mr. Lachlan Maclean was apparently the first active mover in trout acclimatization in the "Old Colony." He did great good in this respect and he was always very willing to give information to inquirers. He helped me much as a journalist, and our acquaintance, started on the introduction of Mr. Senior in 1901, was always a happy one.

The nearest trout river to Cape Town is the Eerste (Dutch for "first"). This stream, which is not big, runs through Stellenbosch, joining the sea near Somerset Strand. The wet fly is always used here, good patterns being March brown with silver body, cow dung, small Jock Scott and small Silver Doctor. The Eerste holds both rainbows and brown trout of good average size. Stellenbosch is roughly thirty miles from Cape Town and can be easily reached by train. There are trout also in the Laurens River which runs from Somerset West to the sea. The Brede, flowing through Michell's Pass (Ares district), holds many trout, though the season of 1919–1920 was not so good as its predecessor. The Hex River, Worcester district, is another good trout stream. The flies mentioned should serve in all these streams. I should also mention the Berg River, from which in 1918 Mr. J. McKenzie, of Meerlust, caught a fine trout on a small black gnat (No. 14, Limerick scale), a brown trout 24½ ins. long, 15 ins. in girth, and weighing 7 lb. 9 oz. an hour and a half after being landed. Generally, for trout fishing in the Western Division of the

Cape Province the best time is from the beginning of October to mid-December, after which everything depends on the rains. Without them the water gets too low. In the Eastern Division of the Province there is trout fishing to be had also, the best of it being in the Transkeian Territories.

East Griqualand (Transkei), noted for its rugged scenery, possesses fine rainbow trout fishing. Natal possesses fine trout streams. Every Natal resident who has studied the subject will agree that Mr. John Parker of Tetworth, Howick, should have the credit for the introduction of trout into Natal.

The Transvaal, which, after useful individual essays, took up the work seriously about 1903, has had success in various parts, notably in the Broederstroom, Carolina, Dullstroom and Machadorp districts. In the Lydenburg district the resident magistrate, Col. Damaut, and Mr. Gehrs have taken an active interest in promoting trout acclimatization. The Elands river at Waterval Boven should be doing well. The Mooi at Potchefstroom did not appear to give the results expected, but in the Transvaal are some "heaven-born" trout streams, as Col. John Buchan, when on Lord Milner's staff, described them. Regarding the beginning of trout acclimatization in the Transvaal, the pioneers, I remember, were Sir Percy FitzPatrick, who made experiments in October, 1900, and Mr. D. C. Greig, of Johannesburg, who also worked in the same direction towards the end of 1902. The Transvaal Trout

Acclimatization Society was formed in Johannesburg on 4th November, 1902. Lord Milner was the first president, with Sir Arthur Lawley as vice-president. Sympathy and practical or financial support were received from Sir George Farrar, Sir Percy FitzPatrick, Col. W. Dalrymple, Col. John Buchan, Mr. A. E. Balfour, Mr. E. T. Baines, Mr. Harold A. Fry and others. Mr. Harold Fry was honorary secretary for several years, and did sound work for the Society.

As regards the Orange Free State, "The South and East African Year Book and Guide for 1919" (Union Castle Steamship Co., Ltd.) states that "trout have also been placed in the rivers." This is good news. The Wilge river, as seen from the train, looks very suitable for them. Sir Harry Wilson with whom I discussed the subject when he was acting Lieutenant-Governor of the Orange Free State, expressed himself as desirous of seeing trout flourish in the Free State.

In Rhodesia, where I have not been, there is native fishing, and I remember the late Sir Starr Jameson saying that bream, which ate well, were to be had there. In Rhodesia in water near Umtali, Penhalonga valley, an endeavour has been made to acclimatize trout. Trout are reported to be doing well in Nyasaland.

Colonel G. Stanley, C.B., whom I had the pleasure of meeting in London again just before I was leaving for Johannesburg, kindly gave me some interesting information. Although more interested in the rifle—as the trophies (heads) of

BEDFORD FARM, JOHANNESBURG
THE HOME OF THE LATE SIR GEORGE FARRER

his prowess in Africa which I saw in the R.A.S.C. mess at Woolwich testified—than in the fishing rod, yet he had seen not a little of angling in Africa. When soldiering near Eshowe, South Zululand, in 1883, he saw frequent catches of yellow fish, taken on the fly, and he himself caught scalies (about which I say something later) in Natal. In British East Africa he took yellow fish in the Chamya and Thika rivers, and he told me that Sir Henry Belfield, sometime Governor of British East Africa, took great interest in the question of trout acclimatization. There are trout in the highland streams of British East Africa. Colonel Stanley said that in the West Kenia district, East Africa, there is a stream which looks ideal for trout, the West Kenia river, running down from the mountain to the plains.

The London office of the High Commissioner for South Africa is at 32, Victoria Street, Westminster, S.W.1. Here of course all South African matters are dealt with. The Trade Section of the High Commissioner's Office, which deals with export matters of the Union, is, however, at present at 90, Cannon Street, London, E.C.4. It strikes one as only a matter of time before the Union authorities will be compelled to build or to acquire a London building appropriate to the importance and volume of the work involved. Betaking myself one day to the Trades Section at 90, Cannon Street, E.C., with one especial object (you can imagine it: hoping to see some South African trout!), I noticed in the window and in

the exhibition hall specimens of South African products. That it was a miniature exhibition in itself can be imagined from the fact that the Union of South Africa (*i.e.* the Cape, Natal, Transvaal, and Orange Free State Provinces) to-day produces and exports—

Gold	Wool	Fruit (fresh)	Beef	Dried fruits
Diamonds	Hides and skins	Maize	Pork	Raisins
Copper	Mohair	Maize meal	Bacon	Jam
Tin	Ostrich feathers	Beans and peas	Butter	Wine
Asbestos	Leather	Lucerne seed	Cheese	Sugar
Corundum	Mimosa bark	Sunflower seed	Eggs	Tea
Talc				Crayfish
Mica				

Remarkable agricultural and manufacturing expansion has taken place in the Union during the last few years. After providing for its own requirements, the value of the Union's exports (including gold) during 1918 was approximately £65,000,000. Manufacturing development on an extensive scale has taken place during recent years. Statistics of production show an annual value of approximately £50,000,000. Amongst the more important manufacturing industries established may be mentioned—

Boots and shoes	Iron smelting
Woollen	Calcium carbide
Biscuits	Cardboard
Confectionery	Anhydrous ammonia
Soap	Concrete piping
Explosives	Cement
Bottle and glass	Starch and glucose
Salt	Breakfast foods
Sugar	Toys
Industrial alcohol	Cattle cake
Wattle extract	Rubber
Furniture	Tobacco

It was all most interesting, and there was a South African atmosphere about it all. In the window were, amongst other views, three illuminated pictures, one of them a South African vineyard at the Paarl; and in the exhibition hall were large photographs of Pretoria, Capetown, Durban, Port Elizabeth, and other places.

But what I most wanted to see was South African trout in glass cases, and photographs of South African trout and streams. Respectful inquiry was therefore made about trout, and it was explained to me at 90, Cannon Street, that the exhibits principally represented export trade, and that, as it happened, trout did not come within that category; in other words, that this Section of the High Commissioner's Office looked after the export trade of the Union of South Africa.

It occurred to me—I express a personal view—that there is a link missing, somewhere. It seems that scope exists for extending knowledge not only of South Africa's industrial features, but also of its residential and sporting attractions. True, there were trophies of native antelope in the exhibition hall. Shooting men are always interested in these. I think that exhibits of that sort could be more numerous with advantage. African antelopes are varied and fine. Possibly specimens of sporting birds, such as the red wing and the grey wing (partridges), and the khoorhan, could be introduced. I do not know how far there would be accommodation for all this,

or what points of detail have to be considered, but having seen onlookers gazing into the South African window, deeply interested in the illuminated pictures, in the ostriches (especially the six weeks' old chicks), and other things, I feel sure that glass cases showing South African trout would be of general interest, and would appeal specially to fly-fishing enthusiasts. Men who might possibly be thinking of a long holiday abroad, but had not quite made up their minds where to spend it, would perhaps find the reminder that South Africa could give them trout fishing just the incentive required to send them thither. Such a result would be good for South African business. For it is impossible that any one should visit that grand country without enjoying it, without being interested, and without being glad to see the land and its people.

The time will surely come when South Africa, like New Zealand, will have its holiday visitors who go out very largely for the sake of the trout fishing. It has already attracted some who took the opportunity, whilst seeing the country, of renewing old pleasures by the riverside. Amongst these visitors was Mr. Cecil Harmsworth, M.P., who made practical and pleasing reference to the trout fishing in a volume entitled "Pleasure and Problem in South Africa."

I have not quite done justice to the Trade Section at 90, Cannon Street, though. Let me make amends. There was some solid information to be got about trout. The lady working at a desk in

the calling-room, who came to answer my preliminary inquiry, referred me, when I mentioned trout, to one of the other officials, at the same time asking if I had seen a booklet entitled "Official Illustrated Guide to Trout Fishing in South Africa," which she handed to me. As it happened, I had two copies, one of them sent to me in England by an old Capetown friend, who had written inside it: "To tempt you back again." None the less I thanked the young lady for her kindness. Her attitude, moreover, showed the indispensable quality in this or any office, viz. intelligent interest in the object of an inquirer's call. Two other officials in the same office gave me information. I received much courtesy, kindliness, and business-like treatment which I gladly acknowledge.

After leaving there, I proceeded to the Office of the Government of the Dominion of New Zealand in the Strand, and in the main hall I chanced to see Captain Donne, who was passing through. Of course I had gone to see trout, but it was a pleasure to meet this official again. He may not say in so many words, "Go to New Zealand," but when you chat with him you feel that that is what you ought to do. The power of his personality and his intense love of New Zealand combine to make you want to go out at once. And he can, if you want them, give you facts and figures which strengthen this desire.

The trout that I wanted to see were there all right, in the main hall, five magnificent rainbows

and two brown trout. As I looked, and looked, at those splendid creatures I was thrilled by their beauty. Comparisons are sometimes unwise, and nothing is further from my mind than to wish to indulge in them here (besides, I have not been to New Zealand), but the thought came to me, why should not South Africa, too, attract trout-fishermen oversea, in spite of Captain Donne and his persuasive powers? But I hasten to add that, whilst sure of and secure in the claims of his beloved New Zealand, he is the broadest-minded of men, and he would not object. There are plenty of anglers in the world.

When a fly-fishing enthusiast can spare the time and money for a long holiday, with the advantage of a sea voyage, and decides to visit South Africa, he has to remember that the seasons there are the reverse of those in the United Kingdom. For instance, instead of a Christmas with folk bewrapped and befurred, he will find a Christmas with a blue sky and people dressed in summer attire—for it is midsummer there. June and July, on the other hand, mean winter in South Africa, and, though it may not be generally realized, it is then sharply cold last thing at night and first thing in the morning in South Africa, especially in Johannesburg, which is 5740 feet above sea level. Rain falls in the Transvaal, Orange Free State, and Natal in the summer; it is exceptional for it to occur in these Provinces in the winter. On the other hand, rain falls in some parts of the Cape Province in winter.

If English people decide on the trip to South Africa, with trout-fishing as one of the main objects, their best plan would be to leave the United Kingdom, say, in August. The sea journey by the Union Castle mail boat from Southampton to Capetown ordinarily takes seventeen days, and from Southampton to Durban twenty-two days. By leaving at the right time in August, the Cape and Durban would be made in September. The trout would be rising by then. The trout fishing would have begun, and it goes on until or nearly until the end of April. As the South African trout-fishing season closes generally in April (the Eerste river, Stellenbosch district, is an exception, ending 31st January), the visitor, if he be leaving the country about April, could easily arrange to get back to the United Kingdom in time for the May-fly. And he would have plenty to tell his friends at his club. For South Africa is a wonderful country. It is a land of surprises. Sunshine is over everything and the atmosphere is buoyant. The rarefied air is a tonic.

Railway travelling, by the way, is good. The railways come under the Government. The third class is used practically exclusively by natives.

The trout fishing must not be regarded as wholly free. Here and there land bordering the river may be equivalent to commonage ; but, as a general rule, inquiries should always be made and if necessary (as it generally is) permission must be sought. It is only fair to landowners to say that permission for a visitor to fish from their

land can be refused. A ten-shilling licence is necessary to "fish for trout in any public stream or waters in the Cape Province." Generally speaking, the artificial fly only is allowed. All the fishing is practically wet-fly so far, though there is no reason why dry-fly should not succeed in certain circumstances.

It may be urged that South Africa is a country of long distances, *i.e.* that you have far to go before you get to your fishing. This has, on the whole, to be admitted. But an angler from the United Kingdom or America who visits South Africa on a trout-fishing holiday should have ample time to make even a two-days' railway journey, if he specially wish to reach some spot a long way off. For town-dwellers in South Africa a railway journey—or at any rate some sort of journey—is generally necessary in order to get trout-fishing. For that matter, the same thing applies almost the world over to town-dwellers. But fishermen can often manage a week-end, especially if a National or a Bank Holiday is included in it. Many times have two or three of us had fishing trips from Johannesburg. We have been to the Klip river at Meyerton and to the Vaal at Vereeniging, though in neither river at present do there seem to be any trout, only yellow fish, which, however, give quite good sport. Trout were distributed in the Klip river at Wittkopjes, near Meyerton, but they did not flourish. This river joins the Vaal at Vereeniging, on the Transvaal-Orange Free State borders.

Vereeniging is in the Transvaal. Once a friend and I went for two days to Waterval Boven (Elands river) in quest of trout; on the one day we had no luck, on the next the water was in flood. In the Heidelberg district—not a far cry from Johannesburg—excellent native fishing is to be had. Johannesburg has an Anglers' Club. Angling is to be had on the Witwatersrand in some dams or reservoirs, some containing carp. It is good to realize that in a mining district like Johannesburg all the usual open-air sports and pastimes are keenly followed, and you can imagine how a miner who has been down below most of the week enjoys his little bit of fishing when he can get it in the glorious open air. Cricket, football, tennis, bowls (for the good old game flourishes in South Africa), are all played with zest, for in Johannesburg sportsmen abound, as indeed they do all over South Africa. It was delightful to hear in England the tributes paid to the cricket, football, and lawn tennis representatives of South Africa. They were acknowledged to be "white men."

Inquiries about travelling, cost of living, and other useful details, would, I feel sure, be answered as fully as possible at the High Commissioner's Office for South Africa, in London. Officially-published facts and figures connected with trout-fishing are to be had in book form, thanks to the enterprise of the Publicity Department, South African Railways, Johannesburg. Managing this Department comes within the duties of the

General Manager of the South African Railways, Sir William Hoy, who is himself a keen fly-fisherman when he can find time. An "Official Illustrated Guide to Trout Fishing in South Africa" is thus published. In addition to the text, which gives information as to trout-fishing over a large area, it contains a wealth of delightful illustrations. South Africa is a vast country, and dwellers in towns were probably unaware of some of the many trout rivers till they saw these pictures. One enjoyable holiday which I had on the Bushman's River, Natal, was due to my finding it pictured in the guide. The picture pulled and I went. "Trout Fishing in the Cape Colony," by Mr. Dumaresq W. Manning, of the Cape Civil Service, was issued in 1908 with the approval of the Government of the Cape of Good Hope. The merits of this book are indicated by the following passage from an article, by John Bickerdyke, in the summer (1919) number of *The Journal of the Fly-Fishers' Club*. He says, "On arrival in Capetown the fly-fisher should get in touch with the Secretary of the Publicity Association, and purchase Mr. Manning's book on 'Trout Fishing in Cape Colony,' which is published at the 'Argus' office. It contains a most useful map."

Although we are primarily concerned with trout, yet it may be added that South Africa's various native fish are not to be despised. Among them are: the tiger fish, a rare sporting fish, the yellow fish, which gives sport to fly and bait, the

scalie, which also can be taken with fly or bait, and the silver fish ; also the baba or cat fish, the culper or burrowing perch, and the mud fish. The baba or cat fish and the mud fish are not interesting. On account of the formation of its mouth, the mud fish often gets foul hooked. The tiger fish, is, I believe, found in both the Olifant's river and the Crocodile river (Transvaal), in the Zambesi, and in some of the rivers running into Lake Mweru.

Crocodiles do not occur in the Cape, Orange Free State, and Natal provinces. Where they exist in the Transvaal the rivers (such as the Crocodile) are well known. If a reader should fish in any river where there are crocodiles, he should be careful ; he must keep a good distance away from the edge of the water—the Union Castle guide book says at least three feet—and he must not run any risk of a sudden attack from a crocodile or of a blow from its tail. The advisability of taking precaution against snake-bites is referred to in the next chapter. Leggings are useful in this respect.

THE FLY-FISHER'S EQUIPMENT FOR SOUTH AFRICA

"But you must have all these tackling, and twice so many more, with which, if you mean to be a fisher, you must store yourself."

Izaak Walton.

XVIII

THE FLY-FISHER'S EQUIPMENT FOR SOUTH AFRICA

SHOULD a British or an American angler — for they are rare travellers, the Americans — decide on a trip to South Africa for the trout-fishing, they will naturally ask : What kind of rod am I to take and what flies ? It is hoped that the information following may be useful not only for travellers visiting the country for the first time, but also perhaps for South Africans themselves who, for one reason or another, have not yet done any trout fishing.

First comes the question of a rod. If the angler wants to make one rod serve all his purposes I would advise him to select a wet-fly rod of from 9 ft. to 10 ft. It can be light but should be of the best quality. A man who is likely to do all his fishing on a small stream might do well to choose the shorter length. Indeed, if the water is much bushed he might be wise to get a still smaller rod, 7 ft. to 8½ ft., so as to throw under or around the branches. But for

a wide and an open stream, the 10 ft. rod is recommended. On the whole, for a man who may be fishing first one year in this river, and then another year in that river, or even in several rivers in the same year, 10 ft. is the best all-round length. If plans admit of two rods, then choose one of 10 ft. and one of say 8 ft. or even 7 ft. for little overgrown waters. And if the angler be one who likes plenty of tackle in his den—like a housewife who has a well-stocked larder (happily always in use!)—then he could go in also for a third rod, and if so I would advise a good dry-fly rod of about 10 ft., one from a high-class maker. Shoddy stuff stands self-condemned. It must not be inferred that three rods are recommended for South Africa as a *necessity*. They are not. Many anglers have one fly-rod only; they have had it practically all their fishing life; they know its strength, its weakness (if any); they have learned to love it; it always does its best; and probably it has been the means of catching hundreds and hundreds of trout. The young angler need not worry. If he takes to trout fishing, and is dissatisfied with the rod he possesses, he will sooner or later meet other fishermen; and he will no doubt be able to get practical hints and information as to various kinds of rods at the riverside. An angler with a good rod is not unwilling—nay, he is often rather proud—to show it to a beginner. Nor should the beginner be surprised, in case the owner invites him to "have a throw with it," if he catch a fish with

it! Twice, in England, did I have this joy. In the one instance, Dr. Clapham handed me his excellent dry-fly rod, "just to try it," when we were on the Colne at Thorney Weir, and he kindly put me on to a rising trout, which I succeeded in catching. In the other instance my good friend the Major asked me to "have a chuck" with his light little 8 ft. rod on the Teme, and I got a good grayling. The Major has already enough impedimenta to stock a fishing-tackle shop, but I was not a bit surprised when he told me the other day in London that he had just bought another fly-rod.

One hint may here be given to the youthful fly-fisher: watch, for all you are worth, the experienced fly-fisherman: study his easy, finished methods. His performance will make you wonder how it is done; you will wish you could only throw a fly like that, and also strike your fish so imperceptibly but so effectively. Take heart. He was once a beginner, like you. Watching another fly-fisherman at work is fascinating and often educative. Once when I was fly-fishing in East Griqualand with my friend Mr. W. Stuart Barclay, of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, we came, on the river Pot, to a pool where the water was quite clear, and where the trout were rising. He said: "I'm going to watch you." I promptly missed a trout. He reported, "I could see everything! I saw the trout come, and you struck too late." The onlooker was able, as it happened, to keep concealed,

so I asked Barclay to have a try, so that I could watch and see how things went with him ; and very soon I was able to tell him, when he was playing a fish, "The identical moment the trout came at your fly you struck him. Well done ! "

This reminds me of a personal performance which the reader will forgive me for relating. I was fishing in that district one afternoon by myself, when a friendly farmer rode by with his " boys " (Kaffirs, no matter what age, are called " boys " in South Africa) in attendance ; they were off to a distant sheep farm, part of the routine programme of the sheep farmers in those parts. Out of sheer gaiety of heart, I said : " I'll see if I can catch a trout for you to take with you." No sooner had the words been said than I bethought me : " What folly to hold out such a rash hope ! " But sometimes the fireworks go off at the right time. A nice trout was at once risen, hooked, played, and landed, and duly handed over to the farmer, whose grateful acceptance of it made me remember the little incident with pleasure.

It will have been noted that a dry-fly rod has been recommended for consideration in planning out equipment. Confession shall be made that, until coming back to England towards the end of 1915, I never possessed a dry-fly rod, having always previously been a devotee of the wet fly. Furthermore, I am of opinion that the wet fly in South Africa is, on the whole, more effective than the dry fly. But the delight I have had in

England with the newer method impels me not to omit it from South African plans.

In concluding my thoughts on rod-buying—they are not meant for the experienced angler, who knows all about these things—I would earnestly say: See that rod, reel, and line all balance. In buying your fly-rod, get one with a cork handle, with a good spike for the end of the butt, and be sure that the stoppers are there. Sentiment, pure sentiment, is at the bottom of this last piece of advice. An authority, for whose opinion on any piscatorial subject the angling world has regard, once showed me his favourite fly-rod. Its workmanship seemed perfect. It must have been a costly rod. But—the stoppers were missing! In a fashionable fishing-tackle shop in London the other day, one of the assistants took down a rod-case, extracted the rod, and—joy!—began to remove the stoppers. He must have been amused at my request: "Oh, do put those stoppers back, and then take them out again, *please!*" The sound of rod-stoppers being removed is like that lovely, spontaneous bark of laughter when, a humorist having told a joke perfectly, the audience, as one man, explodes with laughter. When you go a-fishing always put the stoppers in your right-hand trousers pocket. If you prefer it, you can put them in your hat or underneath your socks—fishing is a go-as-you-please game. But, if you have put them in your right-hand trousers pocket, *they are always there* when you wind up and are preparing

to encase your rod at night. It is pleasing always to be able to find these beloved stoppers *at once*. In any case, whatever I write on this subject, anglers can, and will, please themselves—some of them will lose their stoppers to a certainty!

As for reels and lines, buy good ones. If you want a headache, or at any rate are prepared to depart somewhat from your usual sweet temper, use a crochety, disgruntled reel, get a big fish on, and find that the reel does not respond. Take care of your reel; as the rifle is one of the soldier's best friends, so is the reel to the angler. Cleaning and oiling the reel occasionally help it; the reel says "Thank you!" after it has been attended to, just as (on a bigger scale) does the engine of a railway train, after the railwaymen have given it of their best in this direction. About lines—whether I fish dry or wet, I like a tapered line, though it is not absolutely necessary in wet-fly fishing. Always dry your line after use. Wind it round a chair, or lay it in long coils on the floor, if you like, so long as nobody treads on it. But dry it after use. Some careful anglers, after it has dried, rub the line with a piece of chamois skin.

Please yourself whether, in South Africa, you use thick or thin gut. The usual strength perhaps is 3X. If heavy trout are expected, then 2X might more safely be used. But, on streams where the trout run from about half a pound to three-quarters, capital sport may be had with 4X. Obviously, the finer grade is less for the trout

to see. In any case, there is not much to remember gratefully about the capture of small trout with an anchor for a hook, a cable for a line, a bowsprit for a rod.

Keeping out of sight and using fairly fine gut may be condensed into "fish fine and far off." This may not be generally approved. Some anglers prefer not to risk getting broken on fine tackle. Therefore they adopt, say, 2X gut. Again, some fly-fishermen do not like fishing far off, and swear by a short line; their argument being that, once you have risen your fish, you stand a very much better chance of a successful strike than with a long line. The creed of those who will not have very fine gut, and who prefer a short line, was translated by a master angler and writer as: "Fish with gut as thick as you dare, and fish as near as you can." But try these things for yourself. Make your own experiments. Learn. You will sooner or later teach yourself; or rather Experience will be your teacher. Writing according to my own experience and especially my own enjoyment, for trout I still extol the adage, "Fish fine and far off"—though I am not ignorant of the risks, difficulties, and even disasters that may come by reason of a long line.

All gut should be soaked beforehand. With fine gut, especially, the cast *must* be thoroughly soaked beforehand. Soak it for a quarter of an hour before use. Put the cast in a saucer containing sufficient lukewarm water. A little

glycerine in the water helps. With good gut, thoroughly well soaked, you will fish with confidence. The South African trout play lustily. One of the London staff of a leading firm of tackle manufacturers told me that the late Lord Hardwicke, for his salmon fishing, took the soaking of gut much more seriously than merely putting a cast in lukewarm water. He kept his salmon casts in his damper box, with the flannel pads continually wet, right through the season. By this means the knots were softened.

The beginner will no doubt be worried if he has an adverse wind to contend against, especially when he is using fine gut. With a sound rod, though, he can do a good deal, and anyhow he must do the best he can. It will help him against the wind if he halve the length of his cast and fish with just a tail fly.

Coming to flies, most of the standard wet flies are likely at some time or other to be useful, but if for some reason or other you were limited to six varieties (wet) for South Africa, you could safely choose these : Blue dun, March brown, red spinner, butcher, woodcock-wing-and-hare's-ear, and coachman (for evening). This selection will carry you a long way.

Supposing that one had to select half-a-dozen specially for Natal, perhaps the blue dun should be omitted in favour of the blue jay, an attractive pattern which was very effective on the Mooi (Natal) in the season of 1919–1920. One would hardly have thought that it much resembled any

natural fly. Yet the President of the South African Fly Fishers' Club, Mr. E. Chappell, told me recently that one day he saw on his lawn at Parktown West, an object which looked so much like a blue jay that he thought one of the specimens from his fly box must by some mysterious means have wandered thither. It was, however, no artificial fly but a live creature.

The size of the fly used must depend a good deal upon the river itself. For big rainbow trout, if they are rising to the wet fly, a No. 7 (Limerick, old scale) is not too big; for Loch Leven and brown trout the size may be anything between, and including, No. 12 and No. 9 (Limerick, old scale). In a dry climate eyed flies are obviously better than flies tied to gut, and hackle patterns are as a rule better than winged. Even if I were tied down to six varieties of wet fly, I should personally like to have also a few varieties of dry fly.

As receptacles for the trout when caught I have seen all sorts of things used, from the simple haversack to the wicker creel. Baskets have the advantage of letting more air in, and therefore tend to keep trout fresher, but a fairly big wicker basket is bulky and therefore may be inconvenient. A suitable bag is made of twill or canvas, with leather fastenings and straps. Inside it I like a waterproof compartment, fastened by buttons. These waterproofs, which hold the fish, are of course washable. A landing net capable of being slung or otherwise attached to the angler or

his bag is more convenient than one with just a plain staff. The beginner may be tempted to buy himself a small shallow net. That is a mistake. Have a net which is deep and roomy, as you never know what big trout fortune may have in store for you. Once on the Umgeni I had a shallow landing net and a trout actually got out of it and back into the water. Fortunately the fish was well hooked, but the incident taught its lesson.

All the angler's requirements can be obtained in South Africa, unless, of course, the world-shortage in production has caused a temporary deficiency in stock, perhaps in special makes of rod, for instance. But supplies will, no doubt, in good time be made up. Human nature (especially business nature) is the same the world over. Shops and stores want to sell goods to you, and, if they have not a special line in stock, and if you give the order for it, they will as soon as possible do their best to give you satisfaction.

The trout fisherman about to visit South Africa for the first time will naturally ask if waders are necessary. The reply is that, taking South African trout rivers as a whole, wading can be dispensed with. A man should be able to cast satisfactorily from the bank. The drawback about wearing waders in South Africa for any lengthy period of the day is this : the climate is a warm one, and waders are heavy. In Natal and East Griqualand, particularly, they are practically unnecessary. Of course if the angler's head-

quarters are handy he may—especially if he fears rheumatism—wade for a brief spell and be able then to have a speedy change of clothing. In the Cape Province it is urged that on the Eerste (Stellenbosch) and the Buffalo River (King William's Town district) wading is necessary ; but, generally, waders are proportionately much less used in South Africa than in the United Kingdom.

Whatever you do, do not imitate my supreme folly. Once—for one day only—I attired myself in football shorts. It was on the Umgeni, when I was staying with hospitable friends, the Ross family. Sentiment alone was the cause of my turning out in those football shorts. They were those in which I last played football for Shrewsbury Town. I had kept them as a kind of trophy. It pleased me to wear them again, and as I walked down to the riverside, knowing sport was practically sure, I had happy memories of matches at Copthorne (now the site of many buildings). But to fish in shorts was foolish, because there was no precaution against snake-bites. You will be on the safe side if you include in the equipment a proper remedy for the unfortunate chance of a snake-bite. A Natal friend who was bitten by a snake and had no preparation handy, as a rough-and-ready form of treatment, instantly applied a small quantity of gunpowder to the wound in order to cauterize it, with beneficial results.* Wearing shorts was also

* The snakes of South Africa, "their venom and the treatment of snake-bites," form the subject of a fully illustrated book by F. W. Fitz Simmons. (Published by T. Maskew Miller, Cape Town.)

foolish because of the sun. When fly-fishing, one may stand some time in practically the same position, and if the trout are rising one is apt to be oblivious of other matters. My legs began to burn, but still I went on, until an accident compelled me to stop. Sport was good, and I sat down on the bank-side to exult over my catch. Whether it was because I weigh a good deal or because the ground just at that particular spot was cracking I know not. Anyhow, something gave way and I fell flop into the river! Fortunately it was shallow, but, as against that, there was a sharp stone, with which my left knee came into sudden contact, ripping the flesh severely. My limbs were now the colour of "where the rainbow ends," and I had no alternative but to return at a crawling pace to the farm. How good and kind were Mr. and Mrs. Ross, and their family. They bandaged me up, and generally put me under repair: but there was no sleep for me that night. The legs still burned from the heat of the sun, the wound on the left knee reminded me that it is not always safe for a fat fellow to sit down by the side of the river.

Further fishing being impossible, I went back to Johannesburg. With the optimism of thirty-years I then began to bicycle, until a friend (Mr. Birch, chief clerk then on Lord Milner's staff) insisted on my seeing a medical man. Mr. Birch spoke of the possibilities of gangrene and other cheerful prospects. Therefore I went to a Johannesburg doctor—an old friend, who married

THE EERSTE RIVER (UPPER REACHES)

THE EERSTE RIVER (UPPER REACHES)

the daughter of Captain Dunne (Hi Regan)—and he put me under treatment, with the result that I was soon better. It was eleven days after the accident when I consulted him, and so deep had been the wound that the bone was still bared. The mark remains to this day.

Football boots with strips of leather across the sole help to keep one from slipping on slippery stones. Some fishermen always wear leggings, if only to act as a guard against snake-bites. There may be a heavy dew on the grass first thing in the morning, in which case, if long grass has to be encountered on the way to the waterside, stout boots and leggings or long field boots are obviously desirable.

It is a spacious country. In the dark you can lose your way, with ease, and it is useful to have a compass. Even a farmer friend, who had been long in the country, after fishing the Umgeni until dark, was returning, as he thought, to his hostess's house, when he suddenly realized that he was in the farmyard of an adjoining farm, and near the pigsty!

If you go fly-fishing with the sun on the water you will no doubt get arm exercise and possibly some scalies (unless you are on a length with no scalies), but probably no trout. These fish are then taking a siesta. This refers especially to Natal, where there are not many rainbows, though some flourished in a little river at Tetworth, near Balgowan. In East Griqualand, however, the rainbows—up to one pound in

weight—rise merrily in the sunshine. If it is a grey, cloudy day (in Natal) go by all means. The best time with the artificial fly for big trout in the summer is before breakfast and for half an hour or an hour before sundown: the latter period is bewitching when the trout are rising. Keep out of sight. If there is only one tall blade of grass by the riverside, get behind it for cover's sake. Never give up hope. When you do, give up fishing. If you hook a trout for the first time, and things go awry, experience will teach you where you erred. Peg away until you *do* land your first trout. Every fisherman, even of the highest repute, was once at the stage where he had not yet caught his first trout. To Theodore Roosevelt is attributed a pithy, an inspiring statement, "I put myself in the way of things happening, and they happened." Some fishermen pride themselves on getting their trout into the net in extra quick time, which is all very well if the fish does not get away in the process; others—for instance, Mr. K. Suter, one of the most capable fly-fishermen in Natal—play their trout until it has not a kick left in it.

An English angler, by the way, asks whether the rule in South Africa is "up stream or down." One has a natural preference for the up stream plan, but as a matter of fact experience shows that advising it as a general rule for South Africa would be a counsel of perfection. You can effectively fish up stream, down stream, or across stream. In other words, you must adapt yourself to the conditions of the water on which you are.

NATAL'S EARLY TROUT

"What great events from little causes spring."

(Old Proverb.)

XIX

NATAL'S EARLY TROUT

MODEST but thorough, describes the attention paid by the authorities in Natal, in the early days, to trout acclimatization. Compared with the work done in the Cape Colony, the preliminary attempts in Natal were on a small scale. As I have before said, to Mr. J. C. Parker more than to any other is due the progress made there. In the Cape Colony, as it then was (now it is a Province), there were at least two hatcheries, one at Pirie Bush, near Kingwilliamstown, and the other at Jonker's Hoek, Stellenbosch, near Capetown; at both of which institutions, Mr. Chaplin, a professional pisciculturist, has done devoted efficient work. Numerous indeed have been the official supplies of ova from Jonker's Hoek to other parts of South Africa.

So much enjoyment has been received by wielders of the fly-rod in Natal that a retrospect can fittingly be made here. Many men on leaving the homeland for Natal, have had hopes of finding trout-fishing there. Of these hopeful wanderers I myself was one. Our wishes in respect of

trout-fishing in Natal have been fulfilled. For to-day it is well established there, and it is enjoyed to the full by farmer, townsman, and visitor. What capital fishermen, too, were many of the old Natal police, who, on days off, or even on a few hours off if the river ran near their post, used to revel in casting the fly ; no mean tackle had they, either. Some distinguished officials too, Colonial Governors and G.O.C.'s, have also had happy hours with Natal trout.

Much of this, as indicated, is due to the early work done by Mr. John Parker. Of course he received sympathy and encouragement, but always he was the life and soul of the movement. Coming in 1881 to Natal from Barnsley, Yorkshire, he settled with his brother Edward at Tetworth, a typical Colonial farm, about fifteen miles across country from Howick, near Pietermaritzburg. Yorkshiremen have amongst their loves horses and fishing. Both appealed to Mr. John Parker. Regarding the fishing and the possibilities of trout for Natal —he soon began to make inquiry. The *Field* is associated with the first steps taken. Requiring advice how to proceed, he wrote to the editor of that paper, who forwarded the letter to the late Mr. Buckland, who in turn sent it to the late Sir James Maitland, whose reply took the form of a generous offer to supply ten thousand trout ova. This offer was gratefully accepted. The ova duly arrived—result, failure. Only eighteen eggs hatched, and the alevins were so weak that they soon succumbed. Again Mr. John Parker

consulted Sir James Maitland. Another ten thousand trout ova were most kindly sent. Complete failure had to be recorded this time.

But the determined Yorkshireman does not accept as final a preliminary set-back. In his lexicon there is no such word as "fail." Mr. Parker induced the Natal Government to take an interest in the possibilities of trout acclimatization, and in 1889 they made a grant of £500 in this direction. A committee was appointed, and a site for the official hatchery was selected on a farm between Balgowan and Lidgetton. The hatchery box and filters, copied from the designs in Sir James Maitland's "History of Howietoun," were erected under Mr. Parker's superintendence. The first ova under the Government regime arrived in 1890, and between then and 1893 a number of trout were reared and distributed in various Natal rivers. Not satisfied, however, that the venture justified further outlay, the Natal Government stopped their grant in 1893. But Mr. Parker did not abandon hope, and in 1899 a cheering discovery was made. In some of the rivers, in which distributions had been placed between 1890 and 1893, trout were thriving!

The number (9098, to be exact) of young trout distributed in Natal rivers between 1890 and 1893 formed the basis of trout acclimatization in Natal. More distributions were subsequently made, but in point of fact the observed results of those 9098 young trout induced the Natal Government, even though they had temporarily

dropped active attention to trout acclimatization, to renew their interest in it, to sanction further expenditure, and to encourage the movement generally. When a reporter on the *Natal Witness*, about nineteen years ago, I saw Mr. Winter, then Colonial Secretary of the Natal Government, at Pietermartizburg, and it was a pleasure to see that he was in complete sympathy with the undertaking ; I remember well, even at this distant date, how he pressed the point that good trout fishing was not only an asset in itself to a Colony, but also that it was a distinct source of attraction to visitors.

The Natal Government now invited Mr. Parker to superintend the hatcheries. His was an honorary post, the Government paying out-of-pocket expenses. The original plant was transferred to Tetworth, and was supplemented by two stock ponds. The work flourished, and as honorary superintendent Mr. Parker was responsible for various distributions of trout in different parts of Natal. The happy days which anglers have had on the Mooi, the Umgeni, the Bushman's, and other Natal rivers are thus all traceable to the pioneer work at Boschfontein (where the plant originally was) and at Tetworth.

Eternal vigilance is the physical price of success in running a trout hatchery. I recall a day spent at Tetworth in 1901. Mr. Parker took me to a spruit close to the farmstead, where he had made a little dam, from which the water, led away through a wooden spout, fell into the

hatching box, 7 ft. long, 10 in. deep, 18 in. wide. Across the lower end of the box was fastened a perforated zinc screen to prevent the troutlets escaping. In this hatching box were 110 trout fry, hatched from ova supplied from the Cape. The two stock ponds were each 30 ft. in length, and 4 ft. wide; the depth could be altered from 2 ft. 6 in. to 4 ft. The object of the two stock ponds was to rear trout from Natal-bred ova. In one pond were fifty trout about eighteen months old, fed daily on dog biscuit. What ravenous appetites have hatchery trout! As soon as they were fed, they were after the morsels of biscuit like so many streaks of lightning, and apparently not a particle could have gone undevoured. In addition they got natural food in the water. They looked a fine, vigorous lot of fish. In the second stock pond were only two trout, half a pound each, caught from the Umgeni. Originally there were five trout here, but an otter came, and three obituary notices had to be written.

Such was the Tetworth hatchery in those early days. Its work has long been accomplished, handsomely, and Mr. John Parker can look back with pride upon a fine achievement. The cost of trout acclimatization to the Natal Government was comparatively small. Good trout fishing was available in the Umgeni and the Bushman's rivers before probably £2,500 had been spent. Such a record of success may be an incentive to other colonies which have suitable waters but are not yet committed to trout acclimatization. As a

magnet to attract sporting visitors trout fishing has real value. Moreover, once a wanderer has been to a Colony and likes it, though he may not stay at the time, he may later on return and settle. If good trout fishing is to be had, it is a pull. The Old Country is overcrowded. Anyhow one gets that impression in London nowadays when trying to board an omnibus or strap-hanging in an underground railway. They tell us, too, that the man who can find a house (the kind he wants) to let, in London, or a provincial town, is one of the world's wonders. A vacant house in England nowadays seems as welcome to house-seekers as the biscuits were to those little trout at Tetworth, and to produce rather similar manifestations of eagerness! The call of the colonies should become all the clearer with the homeland in so congested a state.

Mr. Parker's loyal, cheerfully-rendered services were officially recognized, but he probably enjoys his best reward in the realization that he has been the means of providing healthy, wholesome sport for his fellows. He has earned and won the gratitude of colonists and sportsmen. A man who is a keen trout fisherman and who runs a trout hatchery must be unselfish, because after a time he surely finds the personal zest of catching trout diminished. He must be inclined, one would think, to remember the anxiety and labour connected with rearing the fish, and so to regard catching wild ones as in a measure an undoing of his own work.

ON THE MOOI OF NATAL

"I love any discourse of rivers and fishing; the time spent in such discourse passes away very pleasantly."

IZAAK WALTON: "The Compleat Angler."

XX

ON THE MOOI OF NATAL

THE Mooi is one of four really good trout rivers in Natal. The other three are the Umgeni, the Bushman's and the Loteni. The Mooi used to be the most popular not only with anglers in the old Garden Colony, as Natal used to be called before legislature promoted it, on 31st May, 1910, to the status of a Province, but also with anglers farther afield. In Johannesburg, for instance, its fame is established. From Park, the principal station at Johannesburg, golfers go, when on holiday, to the Kowie, Cape Province; those who love the seaside make for Natal in winter, and for favourite haunts in Cape Province in summer; anglers generally make it their starting point for Nottingham Road, Natal, to fish the Mooi.

On leaving Johannesburg for an angling trip in Natal you feel much as you would were you a hard-worked professional or business man in London awaiting at Paddington or King's Cross a train to bear you away on a fishing holiday to Devonshire or Scotland. Of course, you get no salmon in South Africa, yet if it is late September,

or early October, and the blessed rains have fallen, it is grateful to see from your railway carriage window, instead of a land dried-up by winter, the fresh, green grass of the Natal veld. England's green fields contrast with similar charm with the arid London streets.

The Mooi was stocked by the Natal Government in 1899, and its upper reaches—from Rosetta upwards—are distinguished for attractive trout-fishing. Both Loch Levens and ordinary brown trout were introduced. One has only to realize how, on many a hard-fished stream of England, one could work all day and be satisfied with two brace of trout, to appreciate at its full value the fact that on the Mooi on a good day you may get your four, five, or even six brace. My best day was six-and-a-half brace. Many anglers get much bigger bags. And such trout, too! Fat as butter, and rare fighters. A half-pounder will often put up such a gallant fight that, should he free himself from the hook, the generous sportsman will say: "He deserved his liberty."

Those who christened the river the Mooi (the Dutch word for beautiful) knew the value of an adjective. Thrice does the name occur in South African river nomenclature: once in Natal, once in the Transvaal, and once in East Griqualand. The Natal Mooi is the best for trout. Often, when fishing, does one pause to take in its rugged beauty. A fine river is often the most arresting feature of a landscape. The Mooi ministers to a

fertile stretch of land in Natal. Just above Rosetta farm, after which the railway station is named, the Mooi widens considerably for a stretch. Three or four great ledges of rocks spanning the river, over and down which the water comes, look like nature's staircases. Cascades and miniature waterfalls are frequent, in this part ; and the current, except in the still, silent pools, is steady, though not so swift as the Bushman's. The Mooi, which is a trifle wider than the Bain in Wensleydale, Yorkshire, is a fishable river. You can get to its banks so easily. You do not have to war your way through gigantic grasses as is—or was—sometimes the case on the Umgeni ; mighty water-reeds, such as are sometimes met with on the Bushman's, are few and far between ; and water much overhung with bushes like that occasionally found in Cape Province is the exception.

Happy is my recollection of an angling holiday spent on the Natal Mooi one September. Rosetta was my station. Those who chose the names of railway stations in Natal did their work admirably. Restfulness itself is suggested by many of the names—Sweet Waters, Avoca, Rosetta, Cedara, and so forth ; some of them eloquent reminders of auld lang syne.

The first trout of the trip — the tangible reward of that fascinating putting-together of the tackle—was caught near Rosetta station, a spot comparatively little fished then, because it was thought that trout had not come down from

'Berg way in any numbers. Yet there they were. It was a half-pounder only, but as he entered the landing net, he seemed enough and pretty enough to revive "the magical rites of reminiscence." He was taken on a fly called the "butcher"—unromantic name, simply suggestive of slaying. Why could it not have been called somebody or other's Fancy? Killing fly as it is, it does not always score. Mr. David Smythe, a son of a former Premier of Natal, told me he was out the previous afternoon with two flies on his cast, the butcher and the woodcock-wing-and-hare's-ear. The fly which did all the business was the woodcock-and-hare's-ear; the butcher had no orders at all from the trout. That afternoon Mr. Smythe landed seven trout, weighing thirteen pounds. A fine basket they must have been, judging by the brace I saw, after the other five fish had been distributed among neighbours. They were caught in a reach which lies, roughly speaking, between Kamberg and Rosetta.

I only paid a brief visit to the river in the morning when the butcher had claimed my first trout, and did not fish again until sundown, when No. 2 came to the net, a fitting mate for the other. Colour was lent to its capture because it was foul-hooked on the head-side of the dorsal fin. It played very gamely, as all trout thus oddly hooked do. Higher up, but still below the picturesque Falls, trout occur in plenty, but it is a case of (to venture on parody):

> "With here and there a lusty trout,
> And here and there a scaly."

Above the Falls there are no scalies, and there the trout reigns supreme. The scaly of Natal reminds me of the dace of England. The trout above the Falls, where there are no scalies, have smaller, more refined heads than the trout below.

Really, when you come to look at the tiny hook concealed by the dainty dressing called a fly, and when you examine the fine cast of gut, what a lot of luck there seems about the business. Sometimes the hook holds ; sometimes the trout in his dash at the fly misses the business part. One morning on the Mooi I missed four trout, straight off. The next rise resulted in the trout being hooked so firmly that he would have stayed on until Doomsday. No doubt the luckiest man is he who always keeps his tackle in order. But even with sound tackle there are sorrows as well as joys in the game. One afternoon I played a trout for fifteen minutes, timed faithfully by a friend on the bank, and lost the fish. On the cast were two flies, to the other of which a scaly had attached himself. It was pull devil, pull baker. Only the scaly was landed ! Another time, after the usual hard play, what appeared to be a pound and a half trout was being coaxed to the landing net, when the hook gave.

But on two occasions my luck was beyond dispute. One grey morning, with a clouded sky through which no sun penetrated, the fly was smartly seized on a rapid. Line was freely taken, and five minutes fairly flew by, without even a glimpse of the fish to show what-like he was.

Then, with a gradually lessening line, a fine trout came in sight, and at last, completely exhausted, he was received into the landing net. His weight proved to be $2\frac{3}{4}$ lbs. On the other great occasion, the capture went a single ounce better. This was at the magic hour of sundown, just prior to packing up on the Friday for the Rand. Ambition suggested an effort to land a good-sized trout to take back to Johannesburg for evidence, as the lawyers say. A little earlier, a big one had been lost. He had broken the cast just above the tail fly, on which he had been hooked, leaving an unwanted scaly on the second fly, and the torn mouth of the scaly showed what a tragedy tandem driving had been to him. So in order to try and even things, I carried on with one fly only, the good old March brown. Very soon a good trout was pricked, but was no sooner on than off. Then, a few casts later, the hook went into another. Demanding much line, away he sped into the pool, for he had seized the fly at the tail of the rapid, always a desirable spot to try with wet fly. It had been an unlucky pool, for I had lost several hard-pulling trout there, but this time confidence came with the knowledge that only one fly was on, and that therefore no scaly could be a spoil-sport. All the confidence was wanted when he began to leap out of the water—what must these trout be like in Leap Year? Lowering the rod was the instant treatment. At last he rolled over on his back, and was landed, a perfect trout. No sooner was he in the landing net than the

hook worked itself out—an instance of fisherman's luck of the better kind. Two pounds thirteen ounces was what he weighed, and, well salted and peppered and with the vein near the backbone removed, he "kept," and made a delicious item on a Johannesburg breakfast table on the Sunday morning. Trout up to four pounds and even five pounds have been caught towards Kamberg, so the aforesaid brace were comparative youngsters.

These were all real "days in the country." Once my kind host sent me an Indian coolie to act as gillie. When a trout was hooked, this gillie showed remarkable interest in the proceedings. He even used the landing net well. When, as sometimes happened, a trout got off when being played, he would say: "*Oh, Boss!*"—a mixture of sympathy and gentle reproach. It was, however, preferable to the remark of a home gillie to a friend who had the misfortune to part company with a big fish: "And has your honour lost him?" One day was specially worthy of the description I have given. To a novice who had to do thirty miles on horseback there came sore realization that it was indeed a day in the country. Two farmer friends were my congenial companions, and one of them knew the best place. So we rode on. There was frequent temptation to dismount and try some likely spot, but the ride was continued steadily, with "the hobgoblin castles of the Drakensberg," as the late W. G. Steevens called them, in the distance. Once, when we were

overlooking the river from a height, the Mooi shaped itself like a horseshoe: and there was constant music from its rapids. When we reached our destination at midday, luncheon was suggested, but this seemed an encroachment on valuable time with such trout water before us. The younger farmer decided to have two or three casts, just to soak his gut, and almost immediately a bright-hued trout was leaping in the water. The angler kept a tight line on him, and a beautiful fish bordering on two pounds was presently landed. Luncheon, always good by the riverside, was soon dispatched, and the attractive fishing was continued. That day the host got six trout weighing eight pounds, the younger farmer seven weighing ten and three-quarter pounds, while I came last with three of three and a half pounds. My third trout, too, was caught in the last few minutes. The rise had almost ceased, and then "Cotswold Isys's" words about the coachman fly came to mind, viz.:—

> "But if vainly for trout you strive,
> At gloaming never despair,
> Call on your coachman to give them a drive,
> And he will not want a fare."

Accordingly, a coachman was substituted as leader fly, and a fare was soon forthcoming, this trout being one pound and a half. The host called it a bad day. A good day there must be worth having! A ride back across country brought us to the farmstead where a Colonial welcome, typical of the whole visit, awaited us; and you

can imagine how pleasant were good company, a good supper, and rest after so strenuous a day.

Flies recommended for the Mooi river are March brown, woodcock-and-hare's-ear, Sarcelle whisk tail, Hardy's favourite, Vaughan's fancy, red palmer, butcher, and coachman at sundown. A fly tipped with bright red is generally attractive. If you go thither, good luck go with you. And again I call on "Cotswold Isys" :—

> "May coming days be best of all,
> And fuller fill thy creel;
> And richer spoil reward thy toil
> With music from the reel."

FOUR YEARS LATER

"Welcome these pleasant days."

SHAKESPEARE.

XXI

FOUR YEARS LATER

LITTLE or no sun greeted the opening day. It was in fact cloudy, and on the Mooi was that ripple which maketh glad the heart of the wet-fly fisherman. On sunless water there cannot be the usual shadow; trout are apprehensive of shadows. To the butcher and the woodcock-and-hare's-ear trout soon rose, but were quickly missed in the old sweet way. Each time the turn of the wrist was a fraction of a second too late. Had the hand lost its cunning? At last, after an hour's honest fishing, a half-pounder hooked itself, and, after a game struggle, was received into the net; two more trout were caught soon afterwards. Each fish was in the pink of condition. Steady fishing, as time wore on, added two more to the bag, and the tally then stopped—total, five trout, averaging half a pound each. It was clear that August 1st was justified as opening day. Trout could scarcely have been in better condition.

One of the five trout had what might be fairly termed an "appetite." He had gone gamely for the fly, and, on being landed, emitted a frog!

This frog, whose wooing was thus for ever finished, was looking generally pale, and ready for digestion by the trout, but its form was still complete. One man to whom this little incident was related said he could never fancy trout if frogs were their food. As against this, it is contended in some quarters that even frogs themselves are a delicacy ; in fact, when certain Transvaal delegates to the South African Nation Convention were established at Belmont, Rondebosch, near Capetown, early in 1909, and were treated in the course of dinner one evening to a dish described as "snow-chicken," eulogy of the dainty was pronounced. Secrets of the Convention must of course not be given away : nevertheless, if the author of that delightful South African book, "Jock of the Bushveld" (Sir Percy FitzPatrick), should write personal reminiscences in lighter vein, it may be that he will include a little narrative about (*a*) certain artless instructions to a chef; (*b*) their execution, in entire simplicity ; (*c*) the appearance at dinner of "snow-chicken" ; (*d*) its main constituents.

It is generally held that in a South African river, in the competition between trout and scalies for a living, the trout has the best of it. Large numbers of scalies, however, are found in this part of the Mooi, and they made their debut for the season under notice on August 14th. Earlier in the year, when it was frosty weather, hundreds of dead scalies were found floating about in the Mooi, in the Rosetta Station district. No evidence

of poisoning could be traced, and the suggestion was made that the severe frost was responsible for the mortality. The catastrophe, however, did not appreciably lessen the number of scalies; on the contrary, they seemed to be more numerous than four years earlier. "Only a scaly!" is your deprecatory exclamation when you find you have one on, and are seeking higher game in the shape of trout. Yet, after this visit, the scaly has compelled respect if only for the plucky fight he invariably puts up when hooked on the fly. This fish fights stoutly to a finish. The difference between his rise and that of a trout is worth noting. The trout's rise is all business, a simple gulping of the fly, accompanied often by a distinct "chop" in the water, followed instantly by a smart run and sometimes by a screaming of the reel, owing to the demand for line. When the scaly rises, there is an innocent dimpling of the water, much as if the fly is being sucked-in. It is not unlike the rise of the grayling. A little later, though, fury is rampant.

A scaly's rise and subsequent behaviour remind me of the police constable's prisoner who says, "I'll go quietly," and then the next moment becomes violent, showing himself "obstreperous," to quote the police court term. Not only does the scaly play well, but also, properly prepared, he eats well. Of course the bones are a nuisance, but, nicely baked, then vinegared, then fried, and garnished with salt and pepper superadded, the scaly is a palatable dish; though

naturally the trout is preferred at the table, because, in addition to the nourishing goodness of his flesh, there is so little trouble over the bones, once the backbone is removed. Fried or boiled, trout are a delicacy. At one house on the Bushman's river I found a course of trout, boned and rolled, and then baked, which was a positive feast.

Though there are always incidental differences, of course, yet one day's fly-fishing on a river like the Mooi, when it is in normal condition, is much like another. No great records were aimed at, and at intervals a day was not spent at the river at all, or only an hour or so might be put in. The total bag, therefore, was modest, a period of nearly a month yielding fifty-two trout. The number was small, but the average weight was about half a pound, and anyhow the bag included delightful additions in the shape of health and happiness.

One day was red-lettered. The bag totalled a baker's dozen, and twice there was a double event, that is to say, two trout on the cast at once, one on each of the two flies in use. The first time, when the duet was just about to be concluded, and indeed when one trout was already in the net, the other trout gave a long pull and a strong pull and got its mate out of the net. Eventually one of them got off, the other one (the smaller) being finally netted. On the other occasion both trout were secured, and one was a good pounder. Experience by the earlier adven-

tures had taught me that attention with the net should be first directed to the big one. That done, the other, a half-pounder, could be coaxed on to dry land without being netted.

A feature on another day was the occurrence on a shallow stretch of river of a bewildering rise of trout, which were feeding as it they had been hungry all their days and as if this was to be their only meal for years. The fly on the water was what is called the Mooi moth in its artificial form, and it was out in myriads. A blue dun is not unlike it in appearance. Next day came a heavy snow-storm. The hatch of fly would seem to have anticipated it, and to have preferred being snapped up by trout to perishing miserably in the snow.

Killing flies for the Mooi in August are the butcher, Zulu, hare's ear, Hardy's favourite, brown palmer, woodcock-and-hare's-ear, teal and yellow, blue dun, Mooi moth, and (in the evening, or on a windy day) the coachman. I used fine gut, and the hook was generally No. 12, which is excellent for rapids or busy water, but too large for still water, where it is so desirable for the fly to fall like a snowflake ; a splash puts down trout at once.

In August you will probably find early visits to the Mooi river profitless—it is too cold—while the evening rise in all its magic, resembling a May-fly carnival in the meadow streams of England, does not come on until September and later.

Fish or no fish, it is fascinating by Mooi-side

in the "tassel-time of Spring." You may see the Drakensberg, with its Giant's Castle and its Champagne Castle. At set of sun the tips of the mountain heights are as molten gold, while the 'Berg otherwise is a calm, soft blue ; right underneath by way of contrast, is a patch of veld transformed to a dull black by fire-guards (grass burnt in order to prevent accidental fires spreading), while in another direction fire-guards themselves, serpent-like tracts of golden flame, are ablaze. Blue smoke ascends from a farmstead here and there, and all around cattle browse. It is indeed a pastoral picture oversea.

The miracle of spring brings out the willows in a dress of freshest, daintiest green, all the more attractive because the veld generally has not yet wholly lost its sun-scorched appearance. Herons, kingfishers, and an occasional brace of wild duck are to be seen. Once, at the darkening, of short duration in South Africa, an otter was disturbed ; he made off, then suddenly stopped in shallow water, turned round and issued a challenge, as it were, like a great cat spitting out its anger. Towards the end of that August snow fell heavily. Then the peach trees, already advanced in pink blossom, became powdered with white.

A 'BERG TROUT STREAM

"Yon torrent foaming down the granite steep,
Sparkles all brilliance in the setting beam;
Dark glens beneath in shadowy beauty sleep,
Where pipes the goatherd by his mountain stream."

MRS. HEMANS.

XXII

A 'BERG TROUT STREAM

FROM the carriage window of the railway train the traveller espies near Estcourt, in Natal, a river gleaming white in the valley. This is the Bushman's, which has its source in the Drakensberg mountains, and speeds onward through hilly country. Even when not in flood its current is rapid. In flood-time it is excessively busy. Slightly wider than the Umgeni, it is not so broad as the Mooi; but, proportionately, it appears to hold more water than the Mooi. To stock all the tempting and even ideal haunts that the Bushman's offers them trout would need to be legion. There is indeed room for them there, and happily both Loch Levens and brownies are doing their best to occupy it. The trout are not so numerous as in the Mooi, but for all that the Bushman's is a fine fishing river, and the way in which the stock has progressed there must be a source of gratification to the Natal Government of the old days and to their honorary "trout man," Mr. John Parker, of Tetworth, who distributed the fry at Robinson's drift, a score of miles from Estcourt, at about the same time as the Mooi also received troutlets—in

1899. The trout in the Bushman's have certainly gone up-stream, towards the great 'Berg; they have also gone down-stream, but not in the same numbers. Bushman's trout are grand fighters, which, in such wholesome, lively water, is not surprising.

Apart from the actual fishing, the scenery is often majestic—Tabamhlope (an isolated peak), for instance. On the upward journey, by Cape cart, from Estcourt, the 'Berg was tipped with snow, and it was curious later on to have warm, sunny days and still to see that lining of snow on the Drakensberg. With snow in the water it was some little time before the river fined; in the process, though, occasional sport was to be had, generally in a rapid. As a matter of fact, with the river still swollen, the first visit yielded a nice trout. He had advertised himself by rising to a natural fly, was seen, and succumbed to a coachman, a fly found effective for the evening rise, and, if a south wind blew, in the daytime, too. Each succeeding day saw the water clearer—the visit covered the latter part of August and beginning of September—and sport steadily improved.

One surprise was that in certain ideal-looking rapids, here and there, not a rise to the artificial fly could be won. Some of these rapids seemed to be regarded traditionally as blank places. Other rapids rarely failed to yield a trout. With such a frequency of rapids there was not only the sharp water to fish, but also plenty of those choice spots beloved of every wet-fly man, where the foaming rush tails off into the pool:

"Just in the dubious point, where with the pool
Is mixed the trembling stream."

Curiously enough, the heaviest individual trout of the visit was the least game. He weighed a pound and a quarter, but was thin; for his size he should have had four more ounces. It was the beginning of an afternoon's fly-fishing, and this trout could be seen on the feed in some still water. Obviously, he was worth trying for. The first cast never got to him; the tail fly had hooked up in long grass behind, and stayed there. With a big trout inviting attention, there was no time to tie on another fly, so a second cast was made with only a dropper (blue upright). The fly was taken at once, and the trout played steadily, almost lazily. Then he gave two upward leaps that would have done credit to a performing seal; these two aerial excursions seemed quickly to exhaust him, and in two minutes or so he was netted.

A thrilling little adventure was supplied by another trout, safely landed at the foot of a steep bank and near a bush. Fascination was lent to the incident because it meant casting from a reed-covered bank—and right over the high reeds. Trout seem to patronize apparently inaccessible spots by instinct. But it seemed just possible, owing to the ascending bank, to throw over the reeds, and anyhow, it was worth a sporting effort, as trout were rising gaily in the still, deep water. The cast dropped beautifully two or three times without response. But at last a trout rose and was hooked. Away he went right across the river, the reel singing out musically. It seemed

as if the father of all Bushman's trout was on. Yet, when the fish appeared on the surface—some time before being beaten—it was clear that he did not exceed a pound weight. The secret was explained on his nearing the net; he was foul-hooked in the anal fin.

Another time, a trout of some three-quarters of a pound was hooked, and on the line being reeled in he simply spun round and round in the water like a teetotum. He, too, was foul-hooked—close to the tail. Further details cannot be given, because just about netting-time he made a last furious effort, which gave him his liberty. I said—no, I said nothing. I remembered, however, the story of the American. He had just lost a real big one and he called the attention of a friend, with whom he was fishing, to a foaming, savage rapid, saying: "You see that! Well, it mildly represents the internal situation!"

New grass was peeping through the fire-burnt patches, and gradually the veld was greening. Lawns of freshest grass sloped here and there, and willows attained to perfection of verdure. An hour before sundown, if no wind was blowing, a great calm came. Infinite peace reigned in those vast spaces.

Some excellent fly-fishermen farm alongside the Bushman's. They are men who understand the ways of a trout, use fine, sound tackle, cast a fly with judgment, and strike, hook, and play their fish in good style. Useful flies are the Mooi moth, governor, coachman, a fly known locally as Kerr's special, teal and yellow, woodcock-and-hare's-ear, blue upright, and Hardy's favourite.

THE RAINBOWS OF EAST GRIQUALAND

"The spritely infusion of chance."

CHARLES LAMB: "Essays of Elia."

XXIII

THE RAINBOWS OF EAST GRIQUALAND

A CHEERFUL, philosophic comrade is a cause for thankfulness on a fishing trip. Your companion makes or mars its social or fraternal side. Luck came my way on a visit to East Griqualand. My friend's character can be inferred from the fact that, after a poor start by both of us, he gaily but stoutly insisted: "It will be better further on." That proved literally correct, and the fact strengthened his cheerfulness. His philosophy reached its highest point, perhaps, when, in a weak moment, I announced from the waterside: "I keep looking for snakes." "Why look for them?" he sagely inquired.

From busy Johannesburg, East Griqualand seemed a far cry. Ugie and Maclear, it is true, were referred to in the South African Railways publicity book on trout fishing, but the difficulty in Johannesburg was to meet with anybody who had fished there. So we decided to go and take our luck, just as it came. Maxims such as "A wise

man maps out his steps before he begins his journey" were swept overboard, and we resolved that should things go amiss there would be no rebellious spirit. We (my friend is on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange) were buoyed up with hopes of what Charles Lamb called the "spritely infusion of chance."

It is a long journey from the Rand to Ugie, but who ever knew a journey dull to anglers proceeding on a holiday? If you leave Johannesburg on a Saturday night, you find yourself at Bloemfontein early on the Sabbath; you pass through Springfontein later in the day, and before sundown you arrive at Stormberg: thence the line proceeds to Sterkstroom, where, after dinner and a short wait, the journey is resumed the same night on the Indwe-Maclear line. Maclear is the terminus. When, on the Indwe-Maclear line, you look out of the window soon after sunrise, you are greeted with a sight as fair as any in this surprising country. Especially after rain is the scene worth beholding. The eye feasts on kopje after kopje, cañons lying between, and a rolling panorama of wide veld downs. At Elliott, a hill-embosomed village, breakfast is announced, the train waiting while three rival 'buses, whose drivers keenly ply for patrons, convey passengers to the hostelry which provides the meal and back. It is all very simple, old-fashioned and enjoyable. Usually, meals are served on the train in South Africa, but on this branch line the catering is or was omitted. Breakfast over, and the journey resumed, more moun-

tainous scenery rejoices the eye. One feels, as it were, in the presence of primeval shapings, nature in her rude beginnings, and then—Ugie! Just a stationmaster's cottage and the limited structures attached to a small rural railway station, together with a few trees, that is Ugie, baldly described. No hamlet can be seen, for it is a good half-mile away, concealed below a slope. The event of the day is the arrival of the train. Ugie station was explained by a dweller on the spot: "After the train has gone, it is the silence of death."

To the town-dweller, weary of bricks and mortar, of the rushing motor-car and its offspring the motor-bicycle, of clanging tramcar and of unceasing telephone, this is just the place; to him, seeking rest, it is not the silence of death, but of tranquillity and content. Inhaling grateful gulps of oxygen, he gains strength as he communes with mother nature.

All the while, though, he wonders, What of the rivers? What of the trout? The first river is the Wildebeeste (fishing this and other local rivers necessitates a ten-shilling licence), which is only a couple of hundred yards from the hotel at Ugie, and the spot one's mind first fastens on is the big bridge, a worthy piece of workmanship by the Public Works Department of its day. The village is just a large farmhouse, as it were; and the day on which we arrived was Ugie's washing day, which means that Kaffir women were busy doing laundry work in the river, just by the bridge. At this spot there seemed likely places for trout; but the coloured

folk were in possession, and an array of snowy linen on the bank testified to strenuous hours. It recalled an incident of old Severn days, when one of our party, arrived at a promising spot only to find a washerwoman in possession, inquired if there were not other places in the river where she could do her washing, only to receive in reply the poser: "And aren't there plenty of other places where you can do your fishing?"

It is good to see such a river—perennial, too—as the Wildebeeste. Free from bushes, it was easy to fish, though no better in this respect than the Mooi of Natal. Current and colour were alike good, and already we felt glad at having trusted to the "spritely infusion." Nevertheless, three or four days' fishing yielded but little sport, though an hour before sunset small rainbows rose freely at practically any wet fly. However, new fishing grounds were calling to us from Maclear; so, with Ugie held in reserve for a return visit, off we went by the winding railway to Maclear, well known to Witwatersrand mining circles as a recruiting depôt for native labour. Two 'buses plied for patrons of the two hotels at Maclear. Long mail-cart journeys by road are a feature of the country. We had been lucky at Ugie in meeting anglers and the same luck was with us at Maclear. Incidentally we met a rector, a Devonshire man, in whom was a love of all men, especially fishermen. This good man was indeed helpful. At the same time we met a descendant, Manley by name, of the settlers of 1820 (Eastern

Division of Cape Province). In the 1911 season, when the Mooi river, East Griqualand, was first opened, Mr. Manley landed, on the fly, over two hundred rainbow trout, each over 2 lbs. We had no luck at all on our one visit to the Mooi, and were sorry chiefly because of the disappointment to the sergeant-major (a Surrey man) of the district police force, who had himself taken much trouble in the hope of ensuring sport for us, and who was a true brother to all anglers. On this river in April, 1914, the late Major the Hon. C. B. Mitford, who fell gloriously in France, Captain Houston, and Sir Basil Brooke had wonderful sport. They also fished the Wildebeeste. Their total bag on a short holiday was one hundred trout weighing one hundred and fifty-five pounds. They put back all trout under one pound.

From Maclear it was our fortune to proceed by Cape cart to new headquarters, a farmhouse in the direction of the Drakensberg. Our baskets now began to assume some importance. A couple of hundred yards from the homestead was a stream, the little Pot, and it was full of iridescent rainbows. They were real Afrikanders, loving the sun. Morning, noon, evening, they rose to the wet fly, any fly. My friend from Aberdeen was justified in his hopefulness. It was proving better further on. These rainbows, averaging about half a pound, fought so furiously, that a man of Devon might have thought himself back on Dartmoor or Exmoor. A son of Usk might have remembered Brecon. Once I saw a good rise over what

looked like a watercress bed. A Zulu fly secured this trout and he weighed exactly 1 lb. Higher up the stream was a valley so picturesque that it was promptly christened Lorna Doone glen. Here, in mountainous surroundings, the water ran deeper, the trout somewhat bigger; though the only real alderman touched was one risen by the Scotsman who, when I rejoined him near the spot, was saying little, but thinking deeply. He had hooked a big trout in a pool by a rock, and after he had played the fish for a minute or so the line came back—the hook had broken. Asked if he had committed himself verbally, he owned up like a man, and when some of the grief had passed away he estimated his fish at between 3 lbs. and 4 lbs.

Happy days were those spent on this farm, with its stretch of three or four miles of fishing; and for a holiday nothing could be better than the wholesomeness of the country, with the peace that was spread over all. When caves occurred near the water, rock pigeons were sometimes to be heard. Their call ("love in search of a word") corresponding as it does to the cooing of the wood-pigeon, carried the listener to quiet English woods. In the Lorna Doone glen were caves on whose sides bushmen's paintings were to be seen, wild animals, and other reminders of the chase, being depicted on the rude canvas. When the time came to leave—and we had a warm Colonial welcome to stay longer—it was with regret that we went. The kindness of our two young

hosts, bachelor brothers and sturdy Colonials, had been thoughtful and constant.

The feature of the rainbow trout was their willingness to rise to the fly; maybe, time will bring them more discretion, and perhaps more ability to spurn such a lure. Be that as it may, they rose right well when we were there, and a basket of good takable trout, say five or six brace in a few hours, was an easy matter.

From the farm back to Maclear, and thence to Ugie for Christmastide and the New Year, was the programme. At Ugie it was our special fortune to be invited to a veld picnic. A South African picnic with a large ox-wagon as transport is something not to miss. With congenial companions you leave the calendar behind you. You are grateful for the open air, the fresh food, the tea made at the open fires, the good-will, the kindliness of your friends. During our picnic we outspanned on the return journey for a few hours by the Wildebeeste, and a brief visit to the river by two rods yielded a trio of trout in the pink of condition. Cooked on the spot, these provided a veld meal as delicious as wit of chef could devise.

When we were at Inxu Falls—a pool on the Wildebeeste about seventy yards wide, and a favourite haunt of 3 lb. rainbows, which at times rise to the Jock Scott, Durham Ranger, and similar flies—a native caught our horses for us when we were about to saddle up, and was rewarded with a small bonsella (present); he came towards the donor with hand extended, in a manner suggestive

of designs upon his watch-chain. A friend, however, knowing the custom, explained that the native merely wished to kiss the hand, which was his way of saying "Thank you."

The love of litigation is strong in the Kaffir. In a local case, the trouble was over a fowl, valued at sixpence. The Kaffir who had sued for this sixpence lost his case: took it to appeal, lost again: then took it to a still higher court—and won! It cost him fifty pounds altogether. But he evidently thought it all worth while, judging by the triumph with which on the final verdict being delivered he turned to his adversary and said in his native tongue: "I have thrust into you an assegai!"

The effect of music on Kaffirs is interesting. The gramophone, of course, is a stand-by in some remote places where other music would be impossible. One morning one of these instruments began on the record of Sir Edward Elgar's "Land of Hope and Glory." At the moment, a Kaffir shepherd was driving some sheep far up a steep hill opposite. As soon as the music—it was the glorious voice of Clara Butt—began to ring out, the native suddenly stopped. Then he quickly turned round. It was as if he had seen a vision. He listened intently. The thrilling solo continued; and the man at the gramophone, observing the native's attitude, turned the mouth of the instrument right in his direction. Apparently recognizing that the music was thus meant for him, the Kaffir bared his head and stood listening with a reverent wonder which was very impressive.

OLD JOYS IN NEW PLACES

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?"

BURNS.

XXIV

OLD JOYS IN NEW PLACES

AN omnivorous reader once declared that he could read Dickens again for the first time. The Irishry of this will be understood. By the same token, in the angling world, one may seem to come fascinatingly near to catching one's first trout again! The recipe for this enterprise is: First, in boyhood's days, rise, strike, play and land your first trout at home. The memory of the juvenile hopes and fears before that leaping trout became actually yours, the exultation of "landed-at-last," all the details, will be marked brightly in the mental storehouse. Many and much bigger trout may be yours in the homeland, in after years; but never will that very first trout be forgotten.

Second item in the recipe: travel to, or take up your abode in, one of His Majesty's Dominions overseas, where there are trout. Go trout fishing. You will then feel you are going to catch your first trout again! That was how I regarded it.

True, you caught your first trout in England,

Scotland, Wales or Ireland, years ago : yet here you are overseas, experiencing the same sensation, all the eager, boyish delight, once more ; and, when you have caught your first trout in your adopted Colony or Dominion, you will verily feel you have "caught your first trout again !" The youthful joy comes back in its freshness. You are a boy again ! The trout is examined, and looked at, and looked at again. The old appealing details are there, though the setting is so different. You will enjoy the incident all the more if you feel you are part and parcel of your adopted new country. You will feel that it is good to have trout fishing in your new home. You will realize happily that more triumphs may await you. You will say that trout fishing is so good for your health, as indeed it is. Some might give greater honour to the first salmon, the first mahseer, or the first tarpon, but to me the capture of the first trout in a British Dominion seems the second big occasion ; the landing of the very first trout in the little stream at home, in boyhood's days, must always remain the first. That is why I say you may catch your first trout again when you are overseas.

Well do I remember my "first trout again." I had gone down from Johannesburg to the River Umgeni in Natal. The spot to be fished was remote from the railway—Dargle Road was the nearest station—and from the farmhouse where I was staying nobody fished, at the time. I was given directions how to get to the river.

Hard and determinedly I fished all that afternoon. Not a sign of trout was to be seen. Having covered a mile, I came to the Dargle Falls, not far from which spot was a Natal Police station, near Selsley Farm. Then the secret was explained. On the side of the Falls where I had been ceaselessly casting the wet fly, there were no trout, or at any rate very few, then. They were, in those days, concentrated in the length on the other side of the Falls. Nightfall would soon come, but there was yet time on the other side of the Falls, and then, near the white bridge of happy memory, was to be seen a satisfying sight: trout rising! By the time I got to work it was nearly dark, but good fortune sent the fly right over a rising trout, which took it. It was not a good light, and the trout fought fiercely; how I did hope I should steer him clear of those rushes! I did so want to catch my first trout again! At last he came towards the landing net, and was gathered in. My first trout in England, described in the first chapter, was not big enough to keep, and had to be returned to the water; but this game South African fellow, weighing about half a pound, was sizable, fat, and in prime condition. In every way the sport with him was as good as with trout on any water which I have fished. Supremely happy, with the moon guiding the night into the way of peace, I sought the path to the farm; my "first trout again" made me a boy once more, and amongst my thoughts, I hope, was a sincere thank-you to those good, sporting,

far-seeing Colonists who had so successfully developed trout acclimatization abroad.

Those of us whom fortune has favoured in allowing us to fish for and catch trout both at home and oversea, and especially those of us who have been long in the Colonies—though South Africa is now a Dominion—can rejoice at and enter heartily into the unconcealed pleasure which it gives a Colonial-born man to come and fish in the Old Country. Countless kindnesses, thoughtful consideration, great hospitality, friends unchanged with the changing years—such in brief has been my experience of South Africans during many years' stay amongst them. It was therefore delightful, when fishing in Devonshire, to meet a young South African, Major Blackburn, who came to the same hotel. He was having a few days' leave before he returned to his home at the Cape. In keenness for trout-fishing we could all learn something from him. He fished, and fished. Big bags he got, too. Cold days, chilly water, had no terror for him. One early spring day, when two or three of us were on the river bank, and feeling cold at that, he was, if you please, wading in the water, fishing hard. Even that day he got trout. No wonder he won the D.S.O. and the M.C.

Incidents at home connected with the thrilling moment—when a fish hooked needs playing—have curiously repeated themselves abroad. For instance, I have witnessed the nervousness of a novice whose first fish is tugging hard both in

England and South Africa. On a certain trout water in Staffordshire a big, strapping man had asked for a few hints as to throwing a fly, and, the hints given, he was performing promisingly. Then suddenly he had a rise, and the trout stayed on the hook. It was not a large fish, but the man with the rod became helpless, amusingly helpless ; he fairly pleaded for the management of affairs to be taken off his hands. "I shall only lose the trout," he urged, pathetically. It seemed strange that a man keen to learn fly-fishing as he was should be not only willing but anxious to forego the thrilling moment. So it was, however, in spite of his being quietly encouraged to hold on ; and the fish was therefore played for him, and duly landed. This little incident came swiftly to mind when, several years later, I was bottom-fishing for yellow fish in the Klip river, Transvaal. A friendly neighbour, coming up, was invited to join our little party. A rod was handed to him. He had never fished before, but, as so often happens to novices, he had good luck. Scarcely had he put in before he exclaimed : "I have one !" So he had. The thrilling moment, however, had no attraction for him. He implored me to take the rod. The information that it is better for each man to catch his own fish did not appeal to him. He replied with great earnestness that he did not know how, that he was sure he would only lose the fish. As he seemed to be qualifying rapidly for this result, the fish was therefore caught by proxy. It was a silver fish,

turning the scales at exactly two pounds. Diffidence is an attractive quality, but if a man would learn to be an angler, it seems better for him to risk losing his first fish or so, and thus to acquire experience, than to hand over the rod tamely to some one else.

An adventure of old days on the Severn impressed me much at the time, and was carefully stored in my memory, so that I should profit by it should the occasion recur. On a summer evening, when wading on a ford between Cressage and Buildwas, I got attached to a trout apparently between two and three pounds in weight. After a fine fight, lasting several minutes, he escaped. When I reeled up the line I found that a small fish was on the hook. It proved to be a samlet showing signs of having been in trouble. The explanation of course was that the samlet had first taken the fly and that the trout had immediately taken the samlet. Had only the true state of affairs been grasped sooner, the obvious procedure for that special emergency would have been to allow the trout more time instead of never giving him a moment's rest.

The incident in a measure repeated itself about nine years later, when I was fly-fishing on the Umgeni in Natal. The Severn incident leaped swiftly to my mind when two small scalies, having respectively taken each of the two flies on the cast, a big fish was seen darting at one or other of them. A pause, identically as resolved, was made, so as to give the cannibal time. But

it happened to be a profitless wait, for the big fish was evidently a thought-reader: anyhow, not taking any risk, he departed. For consolation there was the recollection of the thrilling moment nine years previously on the Severn, and the reflection that I had profited by it, at any rate so far as effective policy was concerned.

When a bigger fish attacks a smaller fish which is hooked, the angler may have an exciting experience, that is, if the bigger fish becomes involved in the fray. On the Severn one fisherman of my acquaintance was playing a grayling on very fine gut, when a jack, estimated at about three pounds, went for it, and got a hold. Both were played for several minutes, but the jack escaped. Mr. R. B. Marston had better luck once when May-fly fishing on the Piddle, near Wareham. He had risen a trout and was playing it, when a pike dashed out at it. Mr. Marston was master of the situation. Skilfully and patiently he played both pike and trout—though the trout was a comparative infant, and helpless at that, and eventually he landed both. The pike weighed twelve pounds, the trout one and a half pounds. The gut used was 2X. A double trophy in a glass case—the May-fly still in the trout's mouth, the trout still in the pike's mouth, just as when they were landed—now bears testimony to a very remarkable feat, which only a very clever angler could have accomplished. The sight of these specimens—I have been privileged to enjoy it—makes one realize what possibilities fishing holds.

But not many of us, I'm thinking, need order a glass case in advance for pike and trout of these dimensions, to be caught under such circumstances!

One of the avenues through which memory works is the mind's eye, and among sportsmen to whom are given rich opportunities to enjoy visual memory the angler holds high place. The quietness of the scenes in which the contemplative man's recreation is followed invites him to take in his surroundings, and willingly does he accept the invitation. However concentrated his attention on a rising fish, however keen he be on dropping the fly just on the desired spot, there come moments when he looks around him, satisfied that everything is very good. Then it is that the impression is made, then it is that Nature in her own way causes a mental snapshot to be taken; and months, it may be years, afterwards, that particular scene suddenly leaps to life again, through the mind's eye—visual memory. No doubt the mental photograph is best taken when the angler is at his happiest. For instance, he may have had to work hard for a 2-lb. trout, have had to change his fly three times before getting on terms with his fish; and what with weeds, and what with occasional leaps out of the water, there may have been crises during which he feared the worst; but the angler's skill prevails: and then, in the lush meadow grass, the river gliding, here and there an ancient tree towering

out benignly, the sunset gilding the sky, is it any wonder that Piscator, having unhooked his fish, and gently, proudly placed it in his creel, and at the moment realizing that the tobacco in his pipe has a pleasant flavour, does greatly enjoy the harvest of the quiet eye, and that the sight of a like landscape, some similar surroundings many miles away, maybe overseas, causes the old scene vividly to be re-pictured?

An angler, arrived abroad when young, may sometimes seek deliberately to see, in the new scenery, features reminding him of home—an endeavour which, if unaccompanied by morbidity, and if there is no likelihood of too much living in the past, is happily loyal. When I was trout fishing in Natal, in the meadow-land of the Umgeni river, a scene of hay-harvesting called to mind the old familiar sight of the English hay-field, though, of course, the presence of coloured labour made me quickly realize that I was in another clime. A valley in East Griqualand is in a measure suggestive of the Blackmore country; hence its name, Lorna Doone glen. At Alexandria is a massive bridge with arches over a waterway near Gabbarri; something about it awakened a clear mental picture of the bridge at Dulverton, observed and taken-in on a six-days' leave. In the Sudan the sight of a small boat suddenly brought to mind a magazine illustration of panama-hatted "Red Spinner"—in a punt, roach fishing in a bulrush-fringed river. This illustration had been seen abroad, was greatly enjoyed at the

time, and visual memory had done its kindly work.

The Blue Nile has many moods, and one day it was in peaceful humour, having a silvery look ; its main characteristic then was that of a gliding river—and it awakened a clear vision of the Itchen in the meadow-lands at Winchester, and of the Avon at Amesbury. A group of palm trees somehow made one see again the Twelve Apostles, a row of poplars alongside the main road between Buildwas and Iron-Bridge in the Severn valley. Again, to quote an instance of the past happily persisting, the sight of a sakieh at work on the Nile at Khartoum somehow caused a mill-wheel at Bibury to occur to memory, though the likeness was not strong, the sakieh dating back, in type at any rate, to the days of Joseph, while the mill-wheel at Bibury is comparatively modern. The point, however, is the same : that on a fishing excursion Nature takes photographs for the fisherman through the medium of his eyes—both physical and mental—the negative is mysteriously stored away, and long afterwards the fully-developed photograph is presented in a flash, and the presentation inspires a sportsman's grace for good things received from meadow and from stream—from rod and line and landing net.

Postscript

In January of this year (1920), I was on top of a bus going over London Bridge. I heard a

fellow passenger, on the seat behind, say to his friend: "Old England's the best country, after all, to live in! It has its faults"—(this judicially). "But, with all its faults, it's the best country in the world to live in!" His companion agreed. And, while the mirrored lights were twinkling on Old Father Thames, I remember how a Natal lady, who loved South Africa with a deep love, once remarked, with the firmest conviction, to a party of us sitting on a Natal stoëp: "I don't care what anybody says, South Africa is the best country in the world to live in! There cannot be, in all the whole world, a more beautiful country than South Africa!"

I have had happy experience that both speakers were right, and in this little book I have tried to depict a few scenes, record a few impressions, that help to prove it.

The Rise is Over.

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